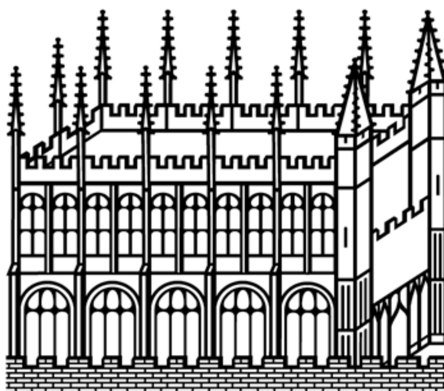

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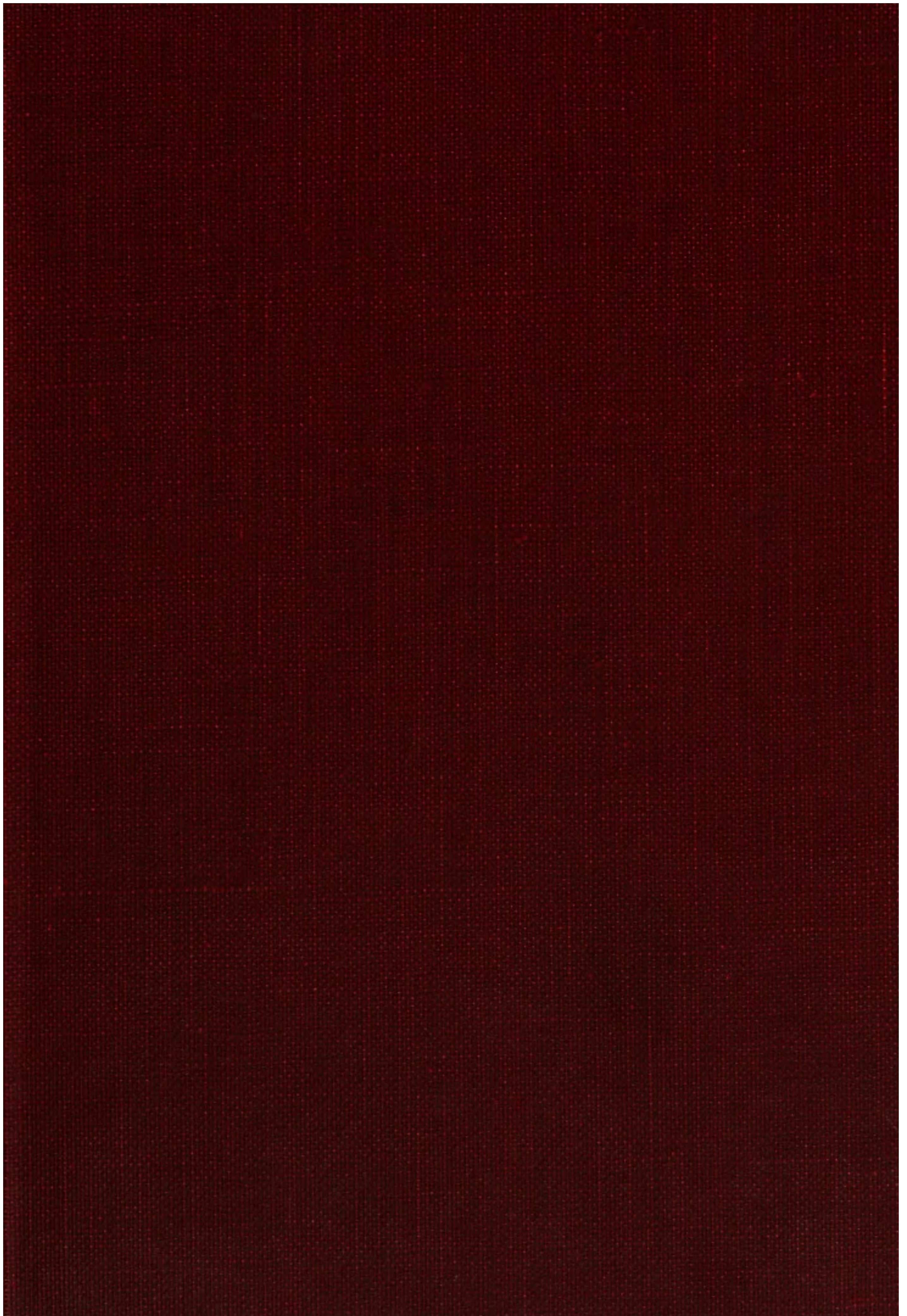

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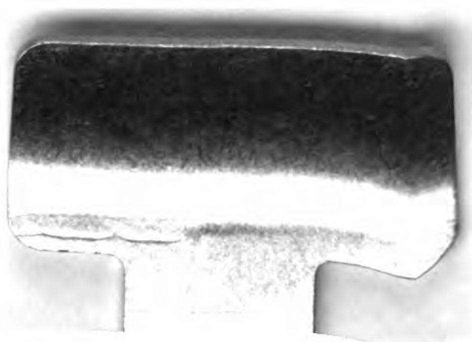

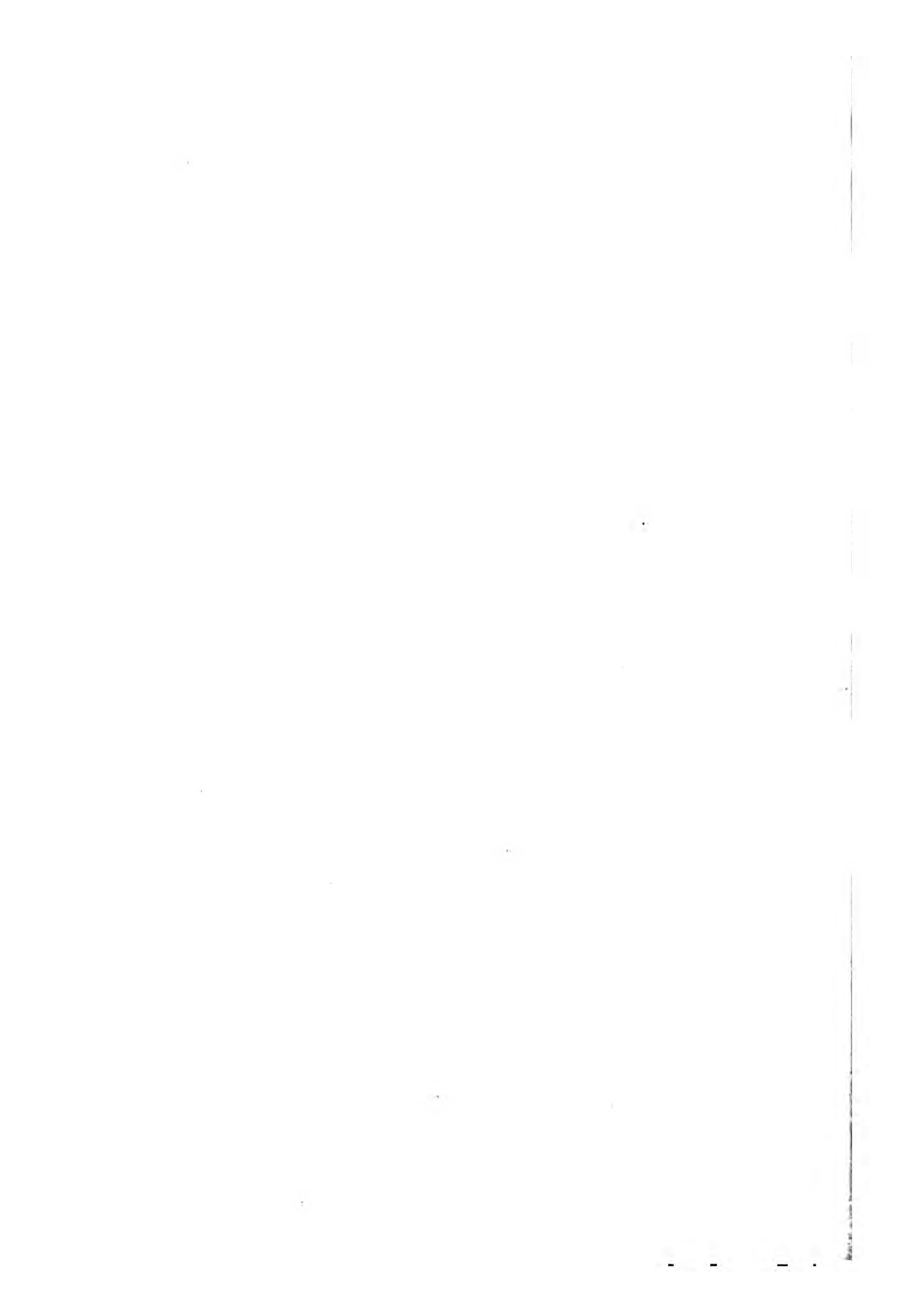

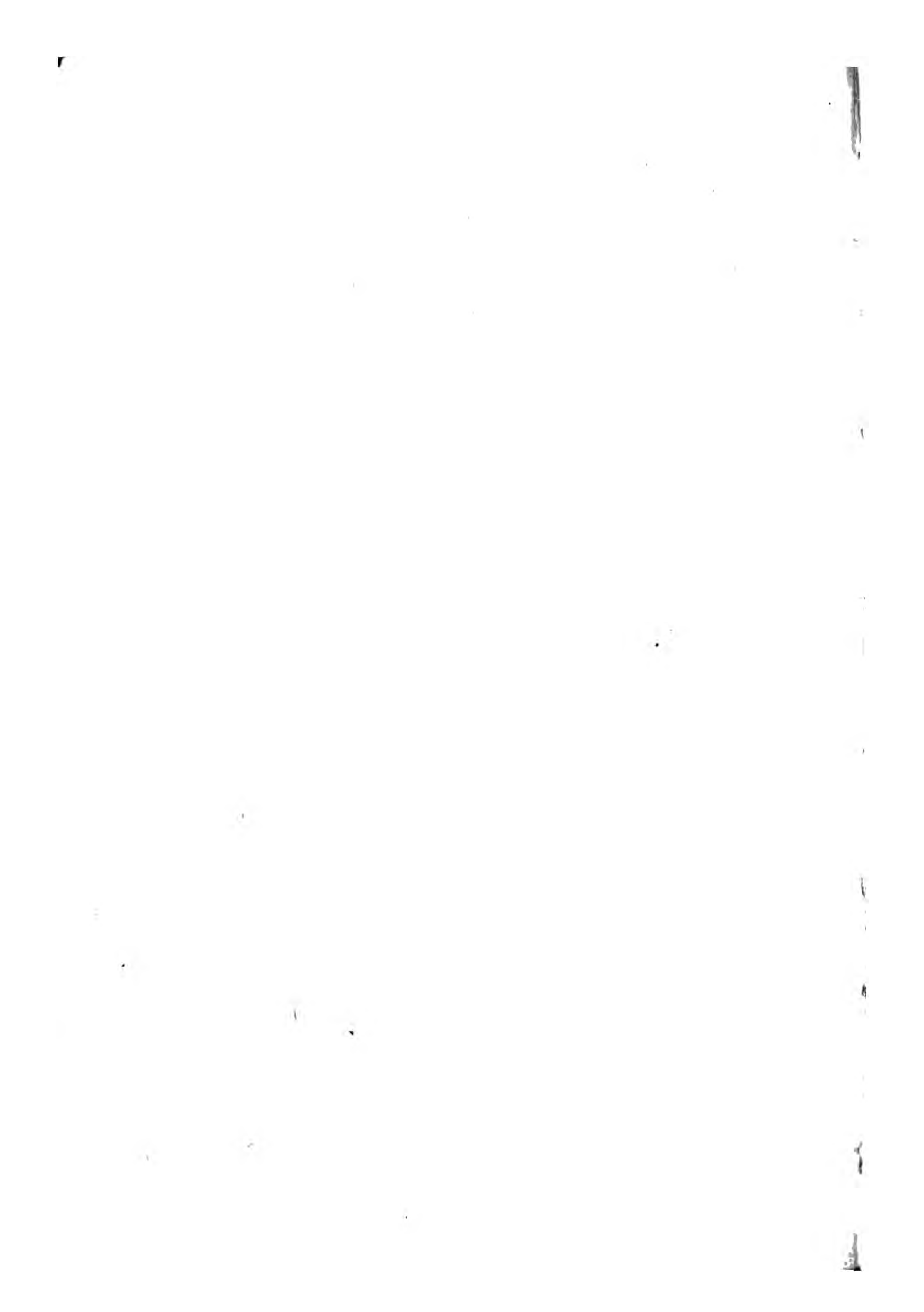

THE CONFESSIONS OF A CANDIDATE

FRANK GRAY

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BY

FRANK GRAY

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DEDICATED

(WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE)

TO THE

MEMORY OF MY SHORT BUT HAPPY AND INSTRUCTIVE ASSOCIATION WITH MY CHIEF

VIVIAN PHILLIPS, ESQ., M.P.

PREFACE

THE following pages have been written in the hope that they may interest and even amuse some readers, especially those who are not candidates, never have been candidates, and never intend to be candidates. I refer to that section of the community which views politics from afar and politicians with suspicion and even distrust. They have also been written as a guide, and perhaps as a warning, to those, as yet uninitiated, who desire to become candidates; for those, too, who have fought and won or lost elections; and finally for those who have graduated as Members of Parliament.

FRANK GRAY.

Shipton Manor.
1925.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	HOW AND WHY I BECAME A CANDIDATE	1
II.	THE CHOICE OF A CONSTITUENCY AND SELECTION AS A CANDIDATE	12
III.	POLITICS AND LOCAL CONSIDERATIONS	22
IV.	HOW TO "NURSE" A CONSTITUENCY—BEFORE AN ELECTION	29
V.	HOW TO "NURSE" A CONSTITUENCY—AFTER AN ELECTION	42
VI.	ORGANIZATION	52
VII.	THE ELECTION OF 1918	64
VIII.	THE ELECTION OF 1922	73
IX.	THE ELECTION OF 1923	89
X.	THE ELECTION OF 1924	101
XI.	IN PARLIAMENT	118
XII.	IN PARLIAMENT AGAIN	133
XIII.	A PARTY WHIP	147
XIV.	A PETITION	159
XV.	REFLECTIONS	171

CONFESSIONS OF A CANDIDATE

CHAPTER I

HOW AND WHY I BECAME A CANDIDATE

IT is at all times difficult to give good reasons for our own conduct in the light of results, but there are few questions so difficult to answer as that to the political candidate—" Why did you take up politics ? " It is a question more difficult to answer after defeat than before. I doubt whether any but he who replies, " Because I was a fool," can give a truthful and satisfactory reply.

Some, and I hope they are many, desire to help humanity and believe that they can best do so by service as legislators, men and women in zeal prepared to make financial sacrifice, prepared to forfeit home life and comfort, for to succeed in

the House of Commons you must learn to live on Blue Books and sandwiches. Whether this end is served in this way I am doubtful, for I believe that the Trade Union leader, the editor and sub-editor of a newspaper, and even the local preacher, play a larger part in the destiny of their nation than the average Member of Parliament does. The man actuated by this zeal for good, in itself the armour provided by Providence, will be called upon to suffer much indignity—to a degree to which very few successful business men would submit.

Mr. Reginald McKenna and Sir Robert Horne probably have it within their power to make the greatest contribution of all our public men to political life to-day, yet both seek solace in business, and are prepared to sacrifice the greater glamour of life which the political world can give. I am not surprised. I have seen Sir Robert rise to the dispatch box in the Commons as the star turn speaker of the Conservatives in a full-dress debate—a man worthy to occupy that position for any party—and yet during the progress of his carefully prepared speech I have seen him twitted and checked by Mr. George Buchanan and Mr. David Kirkwood of the Clydeside, and tittered

at from other benches, for here all are equal, and this a man whose presence at a Board Meeting would silence in awe the giants of our commercial world. Probably he submits to greater indignities in his constituency. It is sad that men prefer the City, the bank and the counting house to the laurels and rewards of public life, but it is intelligible.

A man with a record of twenty-five years' faithful service to a County Council complained to a successful business friend that the electors at the end of his period, after these years of service and sacrifice without remuneration and to the loss and detriment of his own business, even hinted at disloyalty on his part in the conduct of the Council's work. "That," retorted the business friend, "is evidence of the generosity of the public, for on your record of work for nothing they must either presume you dishonest or mad, and they put upon your action what seems to them the more favourable construction."

Again, some seek parliamentary honours, I am told, for social advancement. This may be so, for the tests which determine the right of one individual to take tea on level terms with another individual are passing strange. Incidentally I

venture to think that the modern House of Commons—enriched as I believe by the advent of large numbers of Labour Members, whose method of selection as candidates, perhaps leaving something to be desired, at least shows advancement upon the methods of the older parties with resulting benefits both to the party and the House of legislators—is a recruiting field for those of ability, energy and dogged perseverance rather than the drawing-rooms of fortune and birth.

Some, yet again, doubtless enter Parliament in search of more substantial and material laurels; it may be for credentials of some value on a company prospectus or to be in the public eye—to be in some walk of life or other which makes one distinguishable from one's fellow-man. Motives for a human action which leaves onlookers in a state of speculation, some assigning the most sinister reason which leads a man to desert a lucrative business to serve a fickle public, might well be multiplied, always remembering that what is a sufficient motive to one is not to another.

I first indulged in the desire to become a political candidate while serving as an infantry

private in the army—a human desire to do good evoked doubtless by humanizing surroundings. I had deserted a lucrative business for the army, I had money—I have less after four strenuous years in politics—with which to advance an idea. I reflected that it was unheroic to return to business in the attempt to double a sufficiency, still less heroic in a world of progress to mark time in retirement. With such motives, and a desire to stand before my fellow-men distinguished from other men in the public mind, I sought a career in politics.

Some men become politicians by accident or misfortune. A deputation—a local alderman, a grocer, a draper and temperance reformer burning for a fight at somebody else's expense—at the eleventh hour, on the eve of an election, and after the Party Headquarters have failed to produce either the candidate or the money, call upon a successful and genial lawyer to ask him to do something for the party, and to find a wider sphere and scope for his ability. Some men have been saved by the time-honoured custom of saying, " I must ask my wife," in preference to an immediate decision which all men hate, while others by the same course of procrastination have

been hastened if not hurled to their ruin. Fate is ever stronger than premeditation. No deputation ever honoured me by a visit appealing for my services, so that it became necessary for me, like the majority of candidates, to find an indifferent if not unwilling Association in some constituency.

I was innocent of all knowledge of party machinery and methods. I believed—for my early days were spent entirely in Conservative circles—that the first step, that of being accepted or adopted as a candidate, was scarcely less difficult than to be returned as a Member. I still believe this to be accurate so far as the Conservative Party is concerned, for this party applies the acid tests: Can you subscribe £500 a year to the local organization? Can you pay your election expenses? Can you keep up the dignity of the local traditions of the party by subscribing liberally to all local enterprises, from the local hospital to the latest shove-halfpenny club? Truly severe tests, but not so severe as that which is applied by other parties, namely, "Have you sufficient ability to persuade other people to find your expenses?" It is under this difference of method in examination that it comes to pass that in every four contiguous constituencies at least

one Conservative is returned without causing anxiety to his bitterest opponents in anticipation of anything effective he may do in the assembly of legislators. In all Conservative majorities in the House of Commons it will be found that a large percentage do not play and are incapable of playing any effective part in the proceedings. Money has been their test in selection, but it is not the test in the House of Commons.

My first step in political life was to go to a friend I knew to be high up and honoured in Liberal circles. This was Mr. John Massie, formerly Member for the Swindon Division of Wilts, one of the finest types of unbending and unswerving Liberalism. At a later date he became my President. In that capacity I knew that he frequently had doubts of the orthodoxy of my Liberalism, but through many stages of my political career I had in him a courageous, staunch, steadfast and unquestioning guide and leader. Mr. Massie introduced me to the Secretary, Mr. W. M. Crook, of the Home Counties Liberal Federation. It is his duty—part of his duty—to provide constituencies for candidates and candidates for constituencies. He is a great man at the job, but I frequently reflect

what commerce has lost in him—a born salesman of unwanted goods to the unwilling. In the long run he always has had the ideal candidate for the ideal constituency and the very constituency to suit the candidate interviewed. I say in the long run, because, like the blushing girl, he knows kisses can be too cheap.

After ascertaining by a number of adroit questions that I could find both a contribution to the funds of a local Association and pay my own election expenses, he grudgingly gave me the choice of five impossible constituencies to select from, he himself having already made the choice, but even so he guarded not only against every contingency, but produced in me that state of nervous anticipation of the unattainable which the lawyer produces in the client in whose eyes he desires to justify his bill of costs. He did this by saying that of course it was a matter for the local Association, that he did not know what view it would take, that he could not speak for it, and that it had other names under consideration.

How I made my choice and how I induced one Association out of five in the face of illusive competition to accept my money and myself when, on such terms, at that time (1917) I might

have had the choice not of five but one hundred constituencies without fear of competition, will be spoken of in a later chapter.

The Conservatives will ever have the greater supply of candidates, for money is their test and money will ever be found to be associated with those advancing Conservative principles. Conservatives largely consist of those who have money and their camp followers, who have no chance or have lost hope of making money themselves and like to be where it is.

Sir Robert Buckell, one of the staunchest fighters for Sir William Harcourt when he was Member for Oxford, now a keen-minded octogenarian, to whom I used to go to learn the arts of electioneering, once said to me, "My boy, bring me a register of electors. Tell me the occupations and circumstances of each and I will tell you what they are in politics." He spoke of bygone days when Progressives were united against a common enemy. "Go into the slums," he said, "of any community, usually the stronghold of the Conservatives, for there people have been compelled and taught to live on charity and patronage, but if you find an oasis in this desert—a dwelling with white curtains, a

bright door-knocker and flowers in the window—you have found a Radical who has not lost hope and wants to get on and to have a fair chance of getting on more." He said, "Men on railways, the goods side and drivers and firemen not brought into touch with the public, are Radicals, but passenger guards and porters, also underpaid but with funds augmented by tips and the patronage of the rich, are Conservatives." This was before the days of the effective N.U.R. and adequate wages for porters, and now the young are progressive, and the older, reared in the early school of low wages and charity, bear out this rule.

The Labour Party have ways and means—I think proper ways and means—of raising money from the many and allocating it to the expenses of those deemed fit to be candidates.

The Liberals in the past have found their money partly from the few, who, although having money had not lost their souls in the getting it, were still ready to fight for progressive principles, and were prepared either to be candidates themselves or to contribute to a common fund. The candidates paid for are of necessity of a higher calibre than those who stand as of right with purse in

hand. The Liberal Party will have to find ways and means of obtaining money in larger quantities for a common fund, and they must look, both of necessity and for efficiency, to a wider field.

Chapter II

THE CHOICE OF A CONSTITUENCY AND SELECTION AS A CANDIDATE

I do not rightly remember the exact phraseology, but the candidate never assumes the strict title till an election is in immediate prospect, from which date the expenses of a candidate for election, limited by statute, commence to count. He is selected therefore only as a prospective candidate, which position constitutes a licence to do and spend all that is forbidden to a candidate. Immediately an election is in prospect the Executive Committee of the local party organization is called together; it recommends the prospective candidate to the full body or association of the party for adoption as candidate. From the moment this adoption takes place the candidate assumes the full responsibility of his position, particularly in regard to the calculation of his strictly limited expenses. Unless indeed by some overt act he has already by expression or

implication assumed the position of a candidate —for a candidate cannot avoid statutory obligations by the delay of the overt act of adoption—his expenses may be said to count from the act of adoption, or from the inception of the immediate prospect of an election, whichever may be the earlier.

If the would-be candidate makes his first appearance before the constituency when an election is in immediate prospect—in which event he is sure to be denounced as a "carpet-bagger," a term signifying that he is in the relation of a lodger or commercial traveller to the constituency, unless indeed the candidate on the other side happens to be similarly situated, when there will be silence by mutual consent—then he is, of course, immediately formally adopted, and the intermediate stage which covers the whole period of what is termed "nursing," is of necessity avoided.

For the purpose, then, of considering the methods by which those seeking parliamentary honours become candidates or prospective candidates no distinction need be drawn in description.

The Executive Committee has before it the credentials of the proposed candidate and some-

times the candidate too; and upon his ascertained views and his record, or his absence of record which is sometimes more valuable, he is recommended to the local party Association, and to consider the recommendation this august body is called together. Usually some three or four hundred delegates or representatives of different branches or parishes of the constituency and certain additional co-opted members constitute this body.

The meeting of an Association for this purpose —it seldom or never meets for any other purpose, saving its annual meeting to re-elect its officers— is a solemn affair. The suggested candidate gives a dissertation upon his political beliefs, and this is followed by a number of embarrassing questions touching these beliefs, for you can always rely upon your own party putting a question the answer to which may, if published, be fatal in advance to the cause which he is being selected to champion. It is so easy to answer the questions of opponents, and even to make quite sure that the same individual asks no more questions; but the inquisitive friend must be handled with the velvet glove.

When I was learning the art of being a candi-

date an experienced and reassuring friend told me that I need never be afraid of being " heckled " at a meeting. " Remember," said he, " there is no obligation upon you to answer a heckler, but if you can answer him you get a chance of making a smashing retort." I found this in after experience only in part true, for addressing on one occasion a very overcrowded meeting at Reading, I became conscious of a man in a red tie putting a definite question to me which I was quite unable to answer. You can always instinctively identify the man or woman asking you questions, however obscure they are, in the audience. Remembering my friend's advice I went nervously on, speaking the faster and the louder. A little later I noticed my heckler had done what I conceived to be the impossible, for he had got through the crowd and was appreciably nearer to me. Still I went on, but before long the same question was persistently shouted to me from the very edge of the platform and it was no longer possible to ignore it. In my despair I said, " You seem very proud of the question. You doubtless know the answer. Give it to the audience ! " Then came my triumph, for my heckler commenced a hot and feverish search through the forty-one pockets

every man is supposed to have, like a passenger looking for the return half of a third-class railway ticket. He failed, as we all fail when the ticket collector and a dozen others who thrive on the discomfort of their fellows look on, and the audience roared their laughter at the heckler's discomfiture.

I have always discouraged questions at the end of a meeting. They are cold-blooded, defy evasion and get dangerously prolonged. I prefer the running comment, question and retort, and invite audiences to interrupt me at every stage; though this does not deceive an audience as to whether you are answering questions or not. Nearing the end of a meeting I said, "I am just off to another meeting and you have not asked me any questions. Now's your chance." A voice at the back of the hall was heard: "Ain't no good asking you questions. If we ask you a question you answer seven that ain't been asked."

To return to the selection of the candidate. Questions over, he retires, usually to a cold room or even a landing, while his fate is decided. On the first occasion he feels a pardonable thrill and excitement much like that with which the criminal might await the uncertain verdict of the jury. It

is a misplaced and ill-timed excitement in truth and in fact, for the candidate has no competitor, and however bad a speech he may have made the odds are long that he will be selected.

There are Associations and Associations as there are myths and realities. I have had experience of very different types.

At Watford, my first love, I counted twenty-two persons in the meeting of the Association, of both sexes, and all no doubt estimable people fitted, qualified and authorized to play, by the selection of a candidate, an important part in the political destiny of a vast electorate. At the moment I was proud to have won the confidence of twenty-two of my fellow-men and women, and it was quite a long time afterwards before I reflected that a candidate selected for the position at the suggestion of twenty-two persons was scarcely entitled to win in a constituency with close on forty thousand electors.

At Oxford, my second venture, on the other hand, more persons attended the meeting of the Association than its total nominal strength. This was surprising, since Liberalism in this constituency had tasted nothing but defeat for forty years, but there had always been eleventh-hour

Liberal candidates, and this time the Association realized that a selection well in advance of an election at least predicted a new and severe fight.

I have said enough in this and the preceding chapter to show or suggest that candidates will have some range of choice of a constituency. Sometimes as many as five candidates may be found contesting a single seat, but a careful study of polling records shows that, after all, really capable candidates are a comparatively limited class, the members of which stand again and again, determined to enter Parliament and very generally succeeding eventually in doing it.

Many would-be candidates give great and prolonged thought in the selection of a constituency to which they deem themselves suitable and which they are likely to win. Is this warranted?

I hold the strong opinion that if you exclude a limited number of seats returning Members to the House of Commons (say 20 per cent.) as being of an unalterable political complexion, any seat can be won; more than that, the most unlikely seat often falls the easiest prey. The Chichester Division of Sussex in 1923, when a 13,000 Conservative majority was turned into

a 1,100 minority, provides a good but by no means an isolated example. This change was effected by Colonel Rudkin, an eleventh-hour candidate, who, however, lost the seat again in 1924. I have myself tried likely seats and unlikely seats; I have failed with the likely and won with the unlikely.

All this does not happen without reason and explanation. Before the war, and notably before the Representation of the People Act of 1918 placed on the Electors' List the young men of twenty-one and that unknown quantity, the women of thirty, a very large percentage of every electorate was avowedly and openly partisan. It would not, I think, be wrong to put the percentage of fixed partisans at 65 per cent. Now what I may term the non-political section of the community is much larger, and indeed is placed by some experts at as much as 50 per cent.; that is to say, after allocating to the Liberal, Conservative and Labour parties those who habitually vote with them, there is still an equal number who take no active part except at an election and are politically unpledged.

It is the business of every candidate to apply his mind to the winning of a majority of these

unpledged votes. It is possible to win over votes previously habitually given to the other side, but it is easier to secure the unpledged vote, and still easier, in attempting to shape one's course to conciliate opponents, to drop the substance for the shadow.

Let no Liberal change his course one fraction of a degree to win a Conservative voter. If you agree with him at any point the chance is that he will compromise you in the eyes of your own followers, but he will vote against you all the same. The temperance man, and still more the temperance woman, will, if encouraged, commit you to a policy which is neither intelligible nor explainable, but will vote against you on a party ticket all the same. It was freely stated that I lost at Portsmouth in 1924 because I did not give satisfactory answers to the temperance questions and that 2,000 alone went Labour on this account. This may have been so, but it did not account for Mr. Isaac Foot losing and Lady Astor winning in adjacent constituencies.

If my premises are accepted, it follow that any constituency with the rare exceptions before mentioned may be won in these times of the shifting sands of political thought. Those candidates

who by late selection have no opportunity of "nursing"—an art and craft on which I shall have something to say in later chapters—or having the opportunity do not take advantage of it, may win on a political tide, or, if conditions are favourable, merely by their skill in the conduct of the election. If, on the other hand, they thoroughly "nurse," I believe that they can make victory certain beyond the reach of any adverse political tide, provided always the unhappy candidate does not find himself pitted against a foeman equally skilled in the "nursing" art. Should that happen the political tide will prevail.

CHAPTER III

POLITICS AND LOCAL CONSIDERATIONS

A CANDIDATE's troubles commence with his selection; for it is now that he learns of the local difficulties and considerations—above all it is now that he learns that the true art and sphere of the candidate is not to make great and convincing speeches to an electorate thirsting for deeper information upon abstract economics or the foreign situation, but rather to preserve the peace between the conflicting and contending factions which he will find among his own party, and to appeal to the 90 per cent. of the electors more stirred by their own affairs than by politics.

Here comes the early awakening of the young man with triumphs at the University Union fresh upon him. He has to learn that that which counts is not the out-of-the-way knowledge, the brilliant speech, but the human understanding of all classes, particularly those ranked among your own particular followers.

Moreover, he must learn not to be captured by any one of the said factions and sections of his followers. It is your friends and your enemies who will give you trouble, more especially your friends.

It is difficult for the candidate to steer clear of internal and local bickerings and jealousies and of local causes of conflict. The politician will find enemies all ready made. Let him see to it that he does not widen the area of controversy. The candidate will not be long in the field before a member of his Committee will take him confidentially aside to warn him of the limitations and shortcomings of other members of the Committee; and at a later stage he will find the tables turned upon his early counsellor. "Ah, yes, Mr. —— is a good old fellow and a sound Liberal, but . . ."

The candidate who can steer his own ship and maintain unity and loyalty among the crew has done much to herald victory.

Perhaps I may consider here the question of whether the candidate who is a local man has from that fact a decisive advantage over the candidate who has no local claims. All other considerations being equal, I think the local man

has an advantage over his rival, but the margin of advantage over difficulties and disadvantages is narrow. No advantage is so overrated as that of the "local man." It is all too frequently forgotten that the disadvantages are certain while the advantages are doubtful. Every candidate has his already made enemies—enemies in varying degrees of animosity—I mean political enemies. The moment a prospective candidate makes his first reported speech he alienates that half of the community which belongs to the opposite camp in politics. He runs the risk of adding to his enemies by every subsequent speech. Political enmities can be very bitter. It is, perhaps, to the national advantage that there should be some bitterness in politics, since of all political dangers the deadliest is apathy. But it has often seemed to me strange that so much hostile feeling should have been shown to me by men who had nothing to gain by being Conservatives, and who could not have explained why they were Conservatives, or what Conservatism stands for.

While I was "nursing" Oxford city, both before and after I had been returned as Member, I used to visit a number of football matches, not always in the same part of the city nor con-

nected with the same clubs. On arrival and departure I used to be surrounded by a crowd, chiefly of children, but including adult devotees of the game with whom I could claim to be personally popular. Into these crowds a man who seemed to be able to anticipate the match I should attend would force his way and, usually unnoticed by others, would hiss into my ear some personal or other insult. On one occasion he spat in my face, and this, be it noted, too, not during the heat and storm of an election but between-whiles. I took some trouble to study this individual, and to ascertain his motives, which I felt sure went deeper than politics. I wondered if I had ever done him a good turn to account for this treatment. He got his living by hawking flowers up and down the best residential parts of Oxford, and by minding cars where people were accustomed to park them in the street. He was consistent in that he would not approach my car when parked even for a sure and certain shilling. Both the occupations he followed are calculated to make a man a Tory, for the man so occupied lives by charity and patronage and is not working in competition with his fellow-man. He lived in the slums

where I was popular, and where my most solid vote lay, and so far as I could gather, he had no personal grudge against me, as our paths had only crossed politically.

The "local man" candidate has something more bitter than political enemies to face; he has the enemies all men—particularly successful men—have in their train; and he has, too, to face the biggest enemy of all, the jealous enemy who may perhaps be masquerading as a friend. To be attacked by one who can say, "He is a friend of mine, but . . ." is one of the worst ordeals a politician can undergo.

Again, the "local man" candidate has that most discouraging of all experiences in a long contest, the frequent failure to secure the active support of old friendships. Help comes to us from the most unlikely quarters and is denied us from whence we expected it most.

But all these disadvantages may be outweighed by the advantages which the "local man" candidate throws into the scale. They may be twofold: first, knowledge of him by the electorate, and secondly, popularity founded on that knowledge. If the would-be local man candidate is, in fact, well known but not popular, he had better

go to another constituency, but be it added bad news travels quickly, and an unpopular man in his own locality may find his bad reputation has followed him over many a county and has not lost weight and force in his pursuit. On the other hand, the "local man" candidate who is just unpopular in his own small circle of friends need not despair, for in vast electorates counted in thousands these small circles counted in hundreds do not leaven the lump. It is the wider knowledge of the candidate which counts for good or evil. Candidates often forget how difficult it is to get before the public either themselves or a new brand of pill. They believe that a reported speech in the local paper makes them and their views known. Five out of six householders do not take the local paper, and nineteen out of twenty who take it do not read the candidate's speech, and of those who do read it, 50 per cent. mercifully forget what you said within a week and who you are within a fortnight. It is difficult indeed to be known internationally, difficult to be known nationally, and it is not too easy to be known with a personal as opposed to a political flavour in a constituency of thirty thousand electors. The local doctor who has practised

in the same town for thirty years with an average of five hundred annual patients is unknown to thirty thousand out of thirty-five thousand of the electorate, the lawyer who has a police court practice is known to a smaller proportion. The local grocer, who is nodded to by one hundred people every morning on his way to business, who is on speaking terms with all the people who visit the local club for the morning drink—twenty-seven including the steward—and has his name on a shop in the main thoroughfare, and possibly sings at concerts too, believes that he would be an ideal candidate for the Town Council because he is so well known. But the four thousand electors living in the back streets who are expected to vote for him never heard of him, and know the man who keeps the tripe shop in their midst very much better.

Such is fame.

To win a seat with or against the tide the candidate must be well known, and the knowledge of him must bring with it popularity. It is in vain that you advertise a bad article.

In the next chapter I will explain how a candidate may become known.

CHAPTER IV

HOW TO " NURSE " A CONSTITUENCY —BEFORE AN ELECTION

THE ways and means by which a constituency may be " nursed " to victory or defeat are infinite and therefore there will be as many opinions as men about the best way.

After an election every successful candidate will—if he gets the chance—buttonhole every other successful and unsuccessful candidate and explain how he did it. As the pressure upon the originality of the pressmen becomes greater, it will be as common to see the newspaper heading, " How I Won! by a Successful Candidate," as " How I Lost! by an English Boxer."

Admittedly the candidate who devises his own original method of acquainting the constituency with himself and teaching them to appreciate his views will gain much by originality alone. Moreover, the case must be excep-

tional in which success is due to personal effort along one line. It is usually the aggregate result of a variety of efforts, because one method may appeal to one type of elector and another to another. It is as difficult to conceive of a single method that appeals to the whole body of electors as to imagine an advertiser relying upon one medium only to bring his wares to the notice of the public. The advertiser is aware that some people read the *Morning Post* and others in much larger numbers go to football matches. On the other hand, the reader of the *Morning Post* does not think that anybody reads the *Daily Herald*. They do, however.

I propose to refer briefly to several methods, and respectfully to offer a criticism upon them and to conclude with a method which must, I believe, infallibly and inevitably win any seat, saving only the 20 per cent. of unwinnable seats and any other seat for which the opposing candidate is employing the same methods.

Before dismissing this 20 per cent. of unwinnable and unthinking constituencies, let it be observed that although the said safe seats are frequently reserved for those distinguished statesmen whom the general body of electors,

cannot be trusted to return, these constituencies do not make by any means a disproportionate contribution to the Cabinet rank or to high-placed statecraft. Nobody would suggest that the present representatives of the City of London rank high as parliamentarians in a legislative body of all talents. Lord Banbury, a former Member, was of a different calibre; he was the most destructive politician of his time. No man knows better than he what is best for the nation and no man is so ill acquainted with what the nation wants. Were he Dictator of this country he would produce in six months' legislation a model of what a nation ought to want. The speedy sequel to which would be a revolution.

The University of Oxford sends two representatives, both men revered outside the sphere into which as parliamentarians they are sent to serve. Lord Hugh Cecil would sacrifice a cause —indeed a country—for the sake of a clever sentence in the middle of a short speech, and with it all would have been a leader of men if he, like Viscount Cecil, had been able to forget for a long enough period that he is a Cecil. Viscount Cecil nearly became the international

leader of the great cause of the League of Nations. He just remembered the traditions of the Cecils in time to save the Conservatives, to do more harm to the League than he had ever done good, and to assure himself dying as a Cecil. Sir Charles Oman, the second string of Oxford and a Professor of History, by his persistent championing of the composition of silver coins has gone far to make legislators look upon history as a matter of levity. He might have seemed a great historian if he had never been a legislator.

Now for seats that can be won.

Millionaires have been known to win seats by the lavish expenditure of money, the erection of political and other halls, and the financing of clubs and organizations so that the members of these can obtain better conditions than those belonging to rival organizations. To win in this way there must be no half-measures. The scale of operations must be wholesale and of ever-increasing intensity.

All this is quite legal unless, of course, an election is in immediate prospect. Some (chiefly Labour) people think that intensive nursing of this type should be made illegal. I do not think there could be effective legislation to that

end, nor do I think it necessary. The constituency that returns a millionaire carries with it its own punishment, as it too frequently means virtual disfranchisement. It is difficult for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle and more difficult for a millionaire to become a ceaseless worker for the people. Millionaires are usually good masters and bad servants.

Subscriptions wholesale and retail can win seats but half-measures won't. Nobody can seriously suggest that the giving of a guinea to a football club, to a flower show or a whist drive, unless coupled with something else of which I will speak later, can win a seat. By what line of reasoning, based upon the influence of the act of one upon the mind of another, can the contrary be argued? To give an individual a pound might win a vote, but it would be more likely to make an enemy when he made his inevitable call for a second pound. To present fifty guineas to the local hospital won't win a vote. Whose vote could it win? The Treasurer's or that of the Secretary, or the votes of those who read the subscription list and find that you have given forty guineas more than they? You are more likely to lose than to win the votes of

those whose subscriptions seem paltry beside your own.

Small subscriptions have, however, two indirect values, and it is perhaps these values to which my friend Major Hore-Belisha has the courage to object and which he seeks to forbid by legislation. The first of these is that every non-political document and every gathering or committee into which a candidate can bring his name is good as an advertisement, and if the advertisement comes before the same people many times so much the better. But the more important value is that it gives you the *entrée* into the organization to which you subscribe. This, however, is only of value if you take advantage of it to associate with and help those who are interested in and run the organization. Men and women are interested in slate clubs, flower shows and football matches. The earnest legislator should and will know this, and will seek to interest himself in the lives and affairs of those who are interested in these clubs, shows and matches, and they will support him because they know he understands. It is idle for the candidate from the cloisters to wonder why hundreds of thousands every Saturday go to see

League matches. They do in fact go, and if you don't understand why, you don't understand those for whom you seek to legislate.

Two things I urge. Get yourself before the public you want to vote for you, and throw yourself into the intimate understanding of their lives.

This obligation is imperfectly understood at present. The ancient and highly respectable ladies of the residential parts of Oxford stood aghast at my methods of electioneering when they thought of the aristocratic dignity of Lord Valentia and the academic haughtiness of Mr. J. A. R. Marriott, their former Members, characteristics which to their mind covered all lack in legislative ability, all defects in human sympathy and understanding. To succeed as a parliamentary candidate you must either be dignified or clever. It is splendid if you are both.

The highbrow men of Oxford society were scarcely less horrified. A don of St. John's in the Senior Common Room being asked on the night of the 1923 election for whom he had voted, replied, "Free Trade and Frank Gray, but I held my nose while I did it."

Meetings and the distribution of written propaganda appeal to a small and limited circle. Only $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the electors attend meetings when there is no election in prospect, and only $\frac{1}{8}$ per cent. read the speeches when reported in local papers, and fewer read pamphlets. Meetings advertise you, but remember that to hold a bad meeting is worse than no meeting at all, and so when I held meetings between elections I went to great pains—and greater expense—to ensure success. After one such meeting, I remarked to my wife on the way home, "That was a good meeting." "Yes," she replied, "it was, but if you had briefly advertised that you were going to give sixpence at the door to each of the audience it would have been a larger meeting and cheaper."

But after you have given your subscriptions and paid your footing with the horticulturists, the slate clubs, the cricket clubs and the shove-halfpenny devotees, and you have called your meetings and held them and sent the usual messages to those who did not come, you have still only dealt with and got to know a fraction—a tithe—of the people. There still remains the great still and silent crowd who take no interest

in cricket or football or do not go to clubs or meetings or read anything but a limited part of the local paper. How are these people to be reached and, task more difficult still, to be known and understood? There is no royal route to the understanding and knowledge of the people. No subscription or meeting, however large, will secure them, still less knowledge of them.

You must go to them and talk with them not of politics but of their lot in life. And so I conceived the idea of visiting every householder and then revisiting them. I did not discuss politics with them, I discussed the things which I grew to know were of concern to them. I offered to visit them whenever they sent for me. Shortly, by joining in their hobbies, by visiting them at their work and by constant visits to their homes, I threw myself into their lives, got to know them and, I believe, earned the confidence of thousands.

Mr. Kenneth Lindsay, a young politician, I believe, with a great future, the first Labour President of the Oxford Union and the first Labour Candidate for Oxford at the bye-election after my unseating in 1924, coming curly-haired and pink-faced from the cloisters to the world,

complained to a supporter that I had politically demoralized Oxford. I had taught the workers not politics but to think in terms of "Frank Gray," and so backward were they that they even believed that Frank Gray was the Government!

Did he think that I would go and talk politics to these masses? Does he believe that my heart was so cold that I would discuss the Ruhr with a woman with a child at the breast, four at her heels, and a meat tea to be made ready for the breadwinner at six? No, I would show her that I knew her lot by preparing the tea myself. Does a lawyer trace the origin of his client's rights to Justinian or the doctor relate the history of remedies? No, he creates or should endeavour to create in the client or the patient the absolute belief that he has their welfare at heart, and the knowledge to this end which they themselves do not possess. Mine then is the canvassing that pays, canvassing at the time when there is no election, canvassing bearing no relationship in character or result to the orthodox canvassing.

At first it is hard work, calling for endurance, persistency and the art of handling your fellow-

man, but it has its tremendous compensations—it is the highest form of education. When I look now on a dense area of squalor in any of our towns I know that I know all it means. I know that I can do what few can claim to do—walk into these areas and in five minutes be on level terms with the occupants, even having lived down the prejudice my very clothes do and indeed should create.

After visiting twelve thousand houses I deeply regretted that my task was over. I had grown to live and think in the occupation.

I look back with recollections of varied experiences, many pathetic—a few harsh, offensive, and rude, but not after I had grown to know and understand my people—and some humorous.

On one occasion I called at a one-roomed tenement. The door was ajar and I heard the voices of men within. Two knocks brought no response or invitation to enter. To my third knock, coupled with the inquiry, "May I come in?" a voice from within replied, "You can if you like. We don't want you." To which I answered, "Well, I think I will come in." I entered the dismal living and sleeping abode and faced two men evidently already in heated

argument, one sitting on the only chair and the other on the bed. With the instinct of an Englishman I advanced to the fireplace to have my back against something in face of so sullen an opposition. On the fire top was a saucepan with haddock in water ready for boiling and the handle of the saucepan near my leg. He of the gruff voice pointed, and breaking silence said, "You will knock that over next." "No," said I, "I won't do that, but do you want it cooked?" "We were just going to have tea if you had not come in." "Right," said I, "I want tea too. We will have it together. You go out and get some beer and I will cook the haddock." Was it bribery or corruption? I cooked the haddock; we had a jolly tea and a jolly evening. When I got up to leave, the gruff-voiced man touched me on the shoulder and said, "Mind 'ee, I shan't vote for 'ee."

I did not canvass the whole of Oxford, I left out the best residential part, and wrote the voters a letter instead.

It does not pay to canvass these districts. A cheap eating-house is more profitable than an expensive and fashionable restaurant. In the latter the customers demand carpets, napkins,

tablecloths, waiters, and ten-pennyworth of electric light while they sit over the meal. The workers are much more enlightened; they require what they go in for, good food at the lowest cost.

It takes much longer to interview the residential high class. They expect so much of your time for the same vote and they are slow to distinguish whether you have a good or a bad article to sell. The workers know whether you are sincere at once. The workers are prepared to be convinced by argument—but it has to be sound, and they will want to know whether the advocate is likely to hold his own. The upper ten are usually content with a label. There is a parallel in the fact that the Secondary School boy is more fitted in these days to face the world than the Public School boy.

CHAPTER V

HOW TO "NURSE" A CONSTITUENCY—AFTER AN ELECTION

A MEMBER of Parliament who has won a seat, which has hitherto been of a totally different political complexion, by an overwhelming majority, may easily lose the seat again at the next election within a few months, particularly in these days of large electorates and rapid changes. And this is by no means confined to those candidates who have won on a political wave. The candidate who has won by zealous nursing may, as I shall explain later, meet a similar fate. I was proud in winning Oxford by a nearly four thousand majority, but prouder to retain it by nearly three thousand with my own record vote undiminished.

Then let us consider how seats are lost and how they may be retained by the same means by which they were won. I know that many Members

of Parliament firmly believe that after election their seats will be retained by their reported activities in Parliament—by vote, speech and question. They may retain their seats, but not by these laudable means. The man who sat for twenty-one years in the House of Commons with no questions or speeches and few votes held the seat better than most men.

When a bit of our speech is reported in *The Times*, and in the local paper, which we influence, at greater length, we read it over sometimes three times, and we make our wives read it, but the public don't read it, and this I think on the whole is beneficial to the Member of Parliament, for it will ever be found that our parliamentary activities stir up those we offend by our actions without producing any relative or compensating gratitude or reward. For eighteen months I recorded my vote in every division in the House of Commons except, I believe, on ten occasions. I ranked within the first ten Members for questions asked and within the first twenty-five for speeches made.

On one occasion I was thanked for a vote—by a grocer—for opposing the Merchandise Marks Bill. For the rest I received nothing but

a fair number of offensive letters, anonymous and otherwise, and my votes were freely attacked in my old constituency of Oxford and my new constituency of Portsmouth. Had I never voted, spoken, or put questions, I should have been on stronger electoral ground. There is no place where thinking pays better than in the House of Commons, and speech-making is a dangerous occupation anywhere, only excelled in its danger by letter-writing.

The candidate who wins on a political wave may lose on another wave, and may hasten the disaster by his activities in Parliament. The candidate who relies upon activities in the constituency may lose by a comparison of his conduct before and after election. If you kiss babies before an election you must do so after, for the crowd notice these things—in truth you must kiss more babies more times.

Prior to my return for Oxford in 1922, I had been extremely active—not in baby kissing, I never did this, I boxed boys instead—and ever before the electorate, and I realized that after my return, whatever change there might be, my methods would at least be as active as before. I continued with increased activity and regularity

my association with the multitude of clubs and societies to which I belonged—football clubs, the British Legion, Fire Brigade, cricket, and so on. I visited their meetings; I showed the same intimate interest in their work. It should, perhaps, be noted that while for a Parliamentary candidate to attend a small committee meeting in the constituency he is wooing invites the gibe, "He only wants to get in," a similar action on the part of a Member of Parliament creates a totally different impression.

Now if you live outside your constituency, as I did by a few miles, can the services so readily rendered to your constituency be denied to your own village? The sincere and earnest man would not do so, and the public look now for earnestness and reality.

By the same token it is more helpful to assist one who is not in your constituency than one who is a constituent, for at least the ready scoffer will find a great difficulty in assigning a motive of self-interest.

I got more support by taking up a case outside my constituency of an ex-service man in hospital whose wife was threatened with ejection by a landlord than ever for taking up a case in the con-

stituency. In this outside case the superior landlord, a noble Conservative Peer, was most outraged and offensive because I used without his leave photographs taken with the consent of the tenant. He really believed in the year 1923, after twenty years in the Commons and five in the Lords, that a poor agricultural tenant could not have a photograph of his frightful cottage taken without the consent of the landlord and superior landlord.

It is one of the privileges and duties of the Member of Parliament to take an interest in public institutions. He should visit, within his rights, prisons, hospitals and workhouses, and schools should not be forgotten. It is perhaps strange that I should note that visits of this kind must be confined to the "rights" of a member, but this is no untimely warning, for even in good work of this type, in which votes cannot be involved, the passion and the hatred of Tories are roused.

After a visit of mine to a workhouse not, it is true, within my constituency but partly maintained by rates collected there, the Chairman of the Board of Guardians, a soured and crusty Tory Colonel, made a public protest as Chairman of the Board which I saw got due publicity.

Whenever an action invokes the outcry of an opponent, rest assured you have done a bit of good.

I realized that my first victory was largely due to my personal canvass of nine-tenths of the constituency, but with this belief and with the best intentions in the world, I could scarcely start to re-canvass immediately after an election. Something, however, had to be done. I announced to the electors that on receipt of a post-card I would visit any one of them at the earliest date, and, moreover, at six o'clock on each Friday at a stated place I would sit to receive the visits of constituents. The suggestion met with an immediate response and has been applied to other constituencies. On the first evening the callers numbered three, but, with fluctuating progress, the numbers grew to the record of fifty-seven, necessitating Saturday afternoon and evening being devoted to this occupation.

What did my visitors call about? They opened the wide gates of human problems and tragedies. For some years I had practised as a solicitor with a general practice, in itself a vast education in humanity, but paling before this new attempt to be the father confessor of a whole

constituency. My clients ranged from the lady who called to discuss the abstruse præternatural problem of the day to the drunkard who called to borrow half-a-crown to re-establish and stabilize his financial affairs. Sometimes the drunkard got the half-crown as the easiest way of disposing of him, but I soon learnt that so cowardly and idle a way of disposing of my borrowing friends was wrong. Not only did my friends return, but the glad tidings spread to others in the same district, for there is freemasonry even among habitual borrowers. I often wonder why the belief is so widespread that Members of Parliament ought to pay a petty levy to all and sundry.

Might I here place on record that the largest class of visitor—men and women—wanted advice about matrimonial difficulties: pensions, housing problems and unemployment were perhaps collectively second. In one instance I received the call of both husband and wife, each unknown to the other. Probably that was one of the few occasions in which I got the whole truth of a case. These gatherings provided me with a valuable register of information, of which those charged with the investigation and relief of the troubles

of humanity in Oxford were glad to avail themselves.

The public is a hard taskmaster. What is accepted as a favour and with gratitude to-day by an electorate may be demanded as an inalienable right and binding obligation to-morrow. These interviews, viewed as a boon conferred at the beginning, soon came to be regarded as a prescriptive electoral privilege. The fame of them spread beyond my constituency, and people miles away from the city who had heard of them wanted to avail themselves of them. And besides those who visited me at the appointed hour and place, an increasing number would travel as much as eight miles to my private house, naïvely explaining that they had called when I was not worried by the visits of others!

It must not be supposed for a moment that, in the majority of cases, when an interview was over the business with which it was concerned was finished. Usually an interview merely initiated business which required other interviews and perhaps protracted correspondence. Ledgers and registers soon became essential for the proper handling of cases; and they employed a large share of the time of three secretaries. It all

helped to swell to abnormal proportions the always heavy mail of a Member of Parliament, for each letter demanded an immediate reply, so that a reputation for dealing effectively and quickly with all complaints and difficulties might be maintained.

Such measures may be effective in making a seat secure; but the price is heavy.

The thing that depressed me most in my short parliamentary life was the feeling that the work of a Member of Parliament required two individuals. Indeed it is, I think, one of the failures of our system that the persons generally best qualified to get into Parliament are those least qualified when there to avail themselves with advantage of the position. But were it otherwise, it would still remain difficult if not impossible to fill the twofold duties of a Member. If a Member gives his whole time and attention to the conduct of affairs in Parliament—a task heavy in itself—to the exclusion of all outside conflicting claims upon his time, then in my opinion he has done much to make his seat insecure. While my first Oxford opponent was working in Parliament, I was working against him in the constituency, and even used some of

his votes and speeches in Parliament as ammunition against him. I was, therefore, naturally fully conscious of the need at the height of my activities in Parliament never to take my eye off the constituency. But no man can satisfactorily serve two masters.

Facing the overwhelming growth, increased on the snowball pattern, of activities in Parliament and the constituency, I began to wonder how it could be ended without defeat, for to "slack off" after great activity is to court certain defeat. Unseating on petition, as will appear hereafter, furnished an alternative.

Chapter VI

ORGANIZATION

Political organization is the most difficult of all types of organization. Many a successful business man has failed when called upon to apply his methods of success in the political arena. The business man employs—and pays—his staff of clerks or workers; it is easy to say to those dependent upon their wage, " Come hither " and " Go thither," with some probability that the persons so directed will, within a reasonable space of time, come and go within a reasonable distance of the required direction. The politician, on the other hand, is called upon to organize an unpaid following the majority of whom do not desire either to work or to be organized and over whom he has no control. To these followers must be added at the critical time of an election a crowd of overpaid casual workers picked up for no other reason than that nobody employs

them and who are incapable either of work or being organized. This, then, is the problem that faces the politician, who is ever calling for an organization and a policy—generally for both at the same time—and is frequently found without either.

The prospective candidate usually asks as the first formula, " What sort of organization is there ? " The reply in nine cases out of ten, if truthful, would be, " None," and this whether you have a paid agent or not.

After I had been unseated on petition, Liberal agents wrote to the Press urging that if I had had a paid agent on this occasion there would have been no petition. That is perfectly true, but I am glad to have the opportunity of the retort that it might be equally true that I should not have had the seat to lose.

I have met many agents of all parties, and I have met good agents—men well-nigh capable of achieving the impossible task of organizing " the uncontrollable unpaid "—and I have met bad agents. The worst type of all is the Conservative agent who goes to the public-house at eleven o'clock ready, indeed anxious, to discuss his business with the stranger you send in to ask

about it, and claims that he is picking up valuable and useful information.

The best agent I have met was my own agent at Portsmouth, where I faced my worst defeat—Mr. E. S. Butler, M.B.E. He had an extraordinary knack of getting round him the best in the party who could and would make a real contribution to election work. He, too, knew all about his own party and not less about the other party. He never left his office, and yet knew all that was going on in his sub-offices and everybody else's office.

Faced with the difficulties of organization, and the undoubted absence of organization in a large percentage of constituencies on both sides, the question arises whether organization is desirable. We have clear evidence that it is not essential. Mr. Pemberton Billing has never faced defeat. He got in at a bye-election during the war on a wave which he himself created. He did more; he retained this respectable Conservative seat in the face of a wave against him which he himself had also created. His organization consisted of a motor-car of strange design from which he would speak under the chairmanship of his wife. The case of Mr. Pemberton Billing

and East Herts is exceptional, but there are many cases on record of victories achieved with organizations no better than his.

I think the position may be summarized by saying that organization will not win an election, but, all other things being equal, the presence or absence of organization may be a determining factor. Let us for a moment consider what this precious organization about which the paid agents talk so darkly—every clever business man tries to make a mystery of his own business—really is. In the first place the organization relates to something to be accomplished at the time of an election, for I dismiss registration work, *i.e.* the getting of persons on and off the Register of Voters between elections, as in these days quite valueless. It is arguable that in the old days of small electorates the fight to get fifteen doubtful voters on and an equal number off was of some importance, but now, with electorates of forty and fifty thousand, the task is not to diminish or increase this number by one hundred votes, but to grapple with the one problem of reaching and being reached by the vast number already on the register.

What then has to be done that requires

organization is this: distribution of printed propaganda to the electors' houses, viz. the election address, poll cards and other documents calculated to influence votes, propaganda by advertisement in the Press and by posters on hoardings, the holding of meetings, organizing motor-cars for the conveyance of electors and canvassing. Now except in regard to the last two items no organization is involved, for the work in each case is that of one man or woman. The only organization that could be necessary is to extricate him or her from the confusion created by the attempt to make a one-man job the work of one hundred unpaid people. The last two items have to be organized together, for cars are useless without a canvass.

Propaganda to the doors of the electors is best done by handing the register of electors to an addressing agency, far better than by trying to organize the unpaid and uncontrolled volunteers; an attempt leading to confusion which requires organization to unravel. The Post Office provides a splendid means of distribution, but a distributing agency guaranteeing delivery may be better for a limited or area distribution, but only if guaranteed by a good firm. Never endeavour to organize

individual bill deliveries. Nine out of ten do as I should do—get rid of the bills in every way but the way desired.

The advertisement of an election address or other matter in a local paper requires not organization but payment, and unless the local paper has a daily and very large circulation is quite valueless. A paper such as the *Portsmouth Evening News*, which has a very large daily circulation, is a most valuable medium for announcing meetings and adding a bit of daily propaganda. The circulation of the *Portsmouth Evening News* was such that I found in the 1924 election that the bill-poster was a superfluity, and the only hoarding used except on private premises—of which hereafter—was on a handcart wheeled in the main thoroughfare. On the other hand, at Oxford *The Times* described me as the candidate who flooded the city with original posters. In my view posters must be original, and they must have an effective something upon them to read. Nothing is more futile and childish than to put on a large bill-poster's hoarding six bills " Vote for Gray " next to six bills " Vote for Marriott." And yet at every election pounds are thrown away in this direction. Be this as it may, it is only necessary

to hand the matter to the printer and the bills to the bill-poster. It may need a genius to draft a poster to win votes, but it does not require the organization of the War Office to get them printed and posted.

Posters exhibited on a large number of private premises are of the highest value. The matter on a single bill on private premises is far more likely to be read than if it were a bill among a medley of other bills on a public hoarding. But the greatest value of the bill on private premises lies in the evidence given to the public that there are a number of individuals prepared openly to support you. In this the workers lead the rest of the community. They will the more readily display bills than others, and in their case the greater courage is needed, particularly in the country, where I always advise both Liberals and Labour not to make any display of any kind. I am not unconscious, however, of the high value of the wearing of favours, for more than one election has turned on this. There are many who like to be on the winning side, and there are many who when fighting for a cause are easily depressed. A good display in the wearing of favours may influence both.

There are exceptions to the hesitancy to display posters, photographs, and wear favours. I once went to a butcher in a large way whose main custom must have depended upon Tories, for the loan of four lorries at an election. I said, "Of course our bills shall be pasted over your name so that your trade is not injured." "You can have the lorries," he replied, "but only on the condition that my Company's name is not concealed. We are not ashamed of our colours."

Finally, meetings need not be organized at the time of an election, for people will come and stewards will act. At other times they must be engineered to ensure success. If you decide to hold a meeting you must not only call the meeting but you must "make" it. There are many ways of doing so. You may send round in envelopes a card of the meeting and write a short and different personal note on the back of each, or pledge ten friends each to secure the attendance of six other friends. At election times meetings will make themselves. But you must know in advance how you are going to run meetings at an election. It is advisable to keep by you a list of halls and a list of open-air sites, a list of persons capable of being chairmen and a list of speakers. You should

have also by you a draft letter suitable for each person on the list. First fix your dates and times and places of meetings; advertise all at once and write to all chairmen and speakers, with suggested meetings on the list. It is cheaper and better to advertise all meetings at once, and it saves confusion on each day trying to arrange meetings and draft fresh advertisements. I taught my opponents this after they had had an expensive organization for fifty years.

It is only when the consideration of these matters is left to the arrival of an election that organization becomes necessary, and then it is usually of no avail, for the one-man job has become impossible to be discharged by one man, and he is forced to deputize through indifferent labour.

The one exception I make to the need of organizing is canvassing as part of the election scheme of the candidate. Effective canvassing is becoming increasingly difficult, for the number of persons at once able and willing actually to discharge the duty of canvassing is growing less. Personal canvassing such as I described in Chapter IV has a very much higher value than the work of ordinary canvassers. The former secures votes, the latter only marshals them. Motor-

cars—and this is a matter the Conservatives too frequently forget—are only of assistance if there has been a proper canvass from which you know who are your friends, who has to be fetched and when. At lunch on the day of the election of 1922 I met a Bishop from a distant diocese. He asked me how I thought I was getting on, and remarked, " The most remarkable thing about this election in Oxford which strikes a visitor is the large number of cars your opponent has got and the few people he seems to have to put in them."

The art of organizing canvassing is to divide the constituency up into districts of varying size. It is advisable to choose a chief canvasser for each area, to give him a number of good lieutenants and a number of useless and unreliable canvassers. You will always have the offers of the latter, and they must be absorbed but not relied upon. Men must be chosen suitable to districts, and larger areas can be given to some men than to others. It is no good sending a dame of the first order and degree of the Primrose League to canvass in the slums. She should be reserved for Mayfair.

If the canvass is effective, full information will be supplied to organize and allocate the cars on election day, but canvassers must be chosen who

can be relied upon to work their area throughout polling day. Canvassing is of no avail if this is not done. It is for this reason that canvassing requires organization, for it is useless to divide areas and allocate canvassers if you have not a perfect method to keep in touch with them.

After the 1922 election at Oxford the local Tory paper was good enough to say I had "an almost perfect organization," and this without an agent except for the gifted help of a local lawyer who kept all legalities straight. It is true that I had something of an organization as compared with my opponent, whose organization might well have been described as a perfect skeleton organization on paper. His party had offices and a full organization and an agent all the year, and only the result lacked reality.

It is true that before the election I knew my places and order of meeting, and the caretakers to be applied to; I had ready the lists of chairmen, speakers and stewards and a list of all motor-car owners divided into possibles and probables, and even draft letters ready to be copied; but I had something a great deal more important which only one man could secure and for which no deputy could be found. It was that through a

canvass of 12,000 houses I had an intimate knowledge of the humanity of Oxford. I knew my men and women perfectly. I had 30,000 persons from whom to select two hundred canvassers. Anybody out of so large a crowd could select two hundred men and women of the first order. An organizer can divide areas and allocate men and women. I could do more—I could allocate men and women I knew could canvass and would never fail me, for I had taken two years to select two hundred from thirty thousand.

CHAPTER VII

THE ELECTION OF 1918

IN this election nobody was anyone if he were not a Coalitionist, unless by chance he were a Labour man. Indeed it heralded the later triumph of Labour. The Labour Party immediately gained seats and acquired for the first time a party status in the House; they established in this country the need for a third party.

At this most vital time for legislation, following the new values established by a world-wide war, a time when adhesion to principle was greatly needed, an attempt was made to convince the public there was no real difference between Liberals and Conservatives, even if it might appear to be so when the minor domestic issues were before the country. The attempt was so far successful that large sections of the community still believe that the only alternative to a Conservative is a Labour man.

The public generally without analysing their beliefs played for safety. They wanted to be in a crowd without thought of the composition of the crowd. The old lady wanted to be in a room with two men, even a black and a white man, rather than with one, without regard to the possibility that the black might first eat the white man and then her.

Those steeled by hardship and injustice of the past are not so easily frightened, and they voted Labour. When you come to think of it, the proposal to cut off the head of the bloated capitalist may create a feeling of doubt as to the result of the experiment in the mind of the worker, but it will not create the same feeling of fear in his mind as it will in the mind of the said bloated capitalist.

I was the Liberal candidate at this election for the Watford Division of Herts. I arrived at short notice a fortnight before the polling day from France, where I was serving as a private soldier. I had visited Watford and district only once or twice before, one occasion being that on which I was adopted prospective candidate. Had I then been an experienced campaigner I might have known that with two dozen people at the meeting

of adoption, and only four of them then and thereafter taking an active part, this could not herald a stranger to victory. As it was, in my inexperience I felt particularly grateful to find even four actively working who had nothing at stake and no interest beyond that of supporting a party, and, indeed, I have since had occasion to marvel at the sacrifice of time, if nothing more, which men and women habitually make to support a candidate and a party when they have nothing to gain, not even the chance of being made a Justice of the Peace.

At this election I had the aid of an experienced agent. I had imported him at some expense because of his credentials and experience. He is not in the arena now, so that I may speak quite freely. He had many good qualities, he was honest, trustworthy, painstaking. He had good qualities which in enumeration would have made an inspiring list; indeed he had every good quality except the quality calculated to win elections. Writing from France I had never been able to persuade him that an election was pending, so that no preparations were made, and although he had arrived in Watford six months before the election, he and I were on level terms

in our complete and absolute ignorance of the constituency. He was experienced and never got either confused or anxious. He could never be excited. I failed to excite him to a winning frame of mind. At the most critical time he would be found undisturbed slowly typing with his own hands something of no practical importance. But everything was orthodox. My nomination papers were in order, my meetings were duly called, and I was never permitted to go to one without taking with me a typed form of resolution supporting my candidature—typed by the agent himself. But here reality ended, for at outlying places I frequently found myself called upon to address but a handful of people and without a chairman, and my wife, my only enthusiastic supporter, had to accept the *rôle*.

Since then I have had experience of many meetings at many places for many purposes, and I am thankful that the most awful of my experiences has never deprived me of the sense of humour. I remember at a bye-election standing with three other Members of Parliament on a village green, cold but picturesque. Though the meeting had been well advertised we started with an audience composed of ourselves, the two

chauffeurs who had brought us and one other man. We started in the hope that an audience might be collected, but beyond the original audience never a human being did we see. I became interested in the only man in the audience not of our party, only to learn that he was a visitor from London out for a walk and not otherwise interested either in us or the district. I observed to my colleagues that as we had not seen a native, I hoped for the preservation of our self-respect no native had observed us from behind the screen of blinds.

With a view to starting a meeting I have addressed eloquently the candidate, his wife and chauffeur, and one small boy, and only on one occasion did my courage fail me. Arriving to address a fully advertised gathering in the village dominated by a racehorse owner squire, I found that even the blinds of the cottages were drawn against me and not a living soul did I see. When addressing agricultural audiences in certain parts of England I always prefer the open air to a room —the Church schoolroom has been frequently refused me—and on one summer evening commencing to speak to not more than nine, six of whom had come with me, I concluded my speech to more than three hundred. As I spoke, small

groups of people arrived as if by magic from lanes leading to other villages, doors creaked and opened in the cottages in the vicinity of the green, and from the door by easy stages men and women came to the gate and then actually upon the green. These folk dare not have come to a meeting in a hall. To do that would have associated them directly with me, but coming as they did, if they were afterwards challenged by squire, parson, or farmer, they would have excused themselves with "I saw summat was on and went to see."

I had meetings at Watford and in the country districts, some fairly well attended, but there was an entire absence of enthusiasm, indeed of interest, and the only exciting incident was a heated dispute between a member of the audience and one of my speakers touching the personal character of the latter.

I held quite a number of meetings. A candidate facing an electorate of thirty-six thousand with no knowledge of the district, and with but a handful of canvassers, what else could I do? It was hopeless in fourteen days to attempt a personal canvass, and so I contented myself to issuing a number of posters and an election address.

My opponents were Mr. Dennis Herbert, Coalition Conservative, and Mr. George Latham, Labour (an official of the Railway Clerks' Association). It is an indictment perhaps of the efficiency of our method of representation to state the undoubted fact that of the three candidates, whether judged by ability or experience and knowledge of the people to be represented, Mr. Latham was incomparably the best candidate, and yet, although attached to a growing party, he has failed to secure election to the House in 1918, 1922, 1923, and 1924.

My candidature at Watford illustrates the difficulty which faces a candidate in selecting a constituency when he is given the choice. As inducements to me to contest Watford I was reminded that Hertfordshire was to be the test place for an experiment in Proportional Representation, but this proposal was defeated by one vote in the House of Lords. I was told that there was not likely to be a Labour candidate, and one came into the field within a week after my selection. Finally, it was urged upon me that in 1906 Mr. N. Micklem, K.C., had won the seat as a Liberal while it included the now separate Conservative stronghold of the Hemel Hempstead Division,

and that therefore, relieved of this canker, the constituency became overwhelmingly Liberal. Results falsified this agreeable forecast both at the 1918 and all subsequent elections, and while Watford returned a Conservative in 1923, the Conservative "canker" of Hemel Hempstead returned a Liberal. So much for calculations, and with this addition. At the time of the cutting of the West or Watford Division into two, Mr. Arnold Ward—the son of the late Mrs. Humphry Ward—was the sitting Member and was, I believe an assenting party to a rearrangement which appeared to make two divisions, one overwhelmingly reactionary and the other progressive. Mr. Ward did not offer himself as a candidate for that part of his late constituency which appeared so progressive, and he was not selected as a candidate for the other. Such are the glorious uncertainties of politics.

The outstanding feature of the 1918 election was apathy both at Watford and elsewhere. At Watford only some 60 per cent. voted for three candidates, so that the absentees from the polling booth if so minded could have returned a fourth candidate with a clear majority over the three that stood. In this election too the result was not

declared till fourteen days after the polling day, which must have given prolonged anxiety to many candidates. That was not my case, however, for I was so badly beaten that from the moment the poll closed I had no doubt about my position on it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ELECTION OF 1922

THIS election came unexpectedly as a result of the Carlton Club meeting. The Liberals, that is, the " Wee Frees," to which section I owed allegiance, had spent much time and breath on the retailing and detailing of the shortcomings of the Coalition, and when the battle commenced there was no Coalition to fight! I was lucky, for my opponent, Mr. (now Sir) J. A. R. Marriott, although elected by a nearly six thousand majority as a Coalition Conservative, to do him justice had for more than a year before the Carlton Club meeting anticipated that decision, and had himself attacked the Coalition, so that the issues between Sir John and myself were clear of complications.

This was not my only advantage. I faced, it is true, a six thousand majority in a twenty-five thousand electorate in a constituency which had for forty-two years returned a Conservative;

but this had its compensations, for the Conservatives had grown to rely upon an organization which (as I have already explained) only existed on paper.

On the other hand, I do not claim to have had an organization, but my side knew exactly what it was going to do, and every man and woman who undertook to do anything could be relied upon.

I also had the weakest possible opponent. But do not let me be misunderstood on this point. Sir John Marriott has ability greater than the average in Parliament, and is versed in more subjects than most M.P.s, but as a candidate he had the fatal defect that he had not the slightest knowledge of or indeed human sympathy with the masses for whom he proposed to legislate. I do not doubt that if you locked six Oxford and six Cambridge Professors in a college for a year, and charged them with the production of a code, we should have a set of laws the envy of the world, but I am equally certain that the textile workers of Lancashire would not vote in favour of the same professors being locked up in another college for another year to produce anything more.

I had one great difficulty and disadvantage. It was this, and I will labour it a little in the hope that I may be able to guide and help other candidates and their supporters. During my activities in the nursing of Oxford I had succeeded in convincing a few Conservatives that I was winning; fortunately I only so convinced the younger members and never woke up the elders of an ancient party. I would meet a Conservative and he would say, " You will win this show if our party doesn't wake up. You know how to get among the people." I used to go home and I would say to my secretary, " If that fool goes and talks to the agent we are lost. They will wake up and take me seriously." I actually had to attack once a month, whether he deserved it or not, the editor of the local Conservative paper because I saw that his generosity might be fatal. At last I got him to attack me. But what I never did succeed in doing was to convince the leaders of my own party that I was winning. Up to the very last—indeed during the " count " they said to me, " You have put up a fine fight, but you can't expect to win. Don't be disappointed." And I had won by nearly four thousand.

Nothing is more damaging than the want of faith in your own supporters and of blind belief in victory. Many candidates—candidates of temperament—have been killed by this. Your candidate to do his best must believe he is winning; but if he doesn't you cannot expect others to believe it.

At this election my friends and supporters were ready to the last button, but our Conservative opponents were the first to open fire. Sir John Marriott had foreseen the result of the Carlton Club meeting, and had called a meeting for a day I think actually following this meeting. To do so was a mistake from which all candidates may profit. Never unmask your batteries first if you can help it, and never start too soon if you desire to create a wave of enthusiasm. An election should, I urge, be conducted with progressive activity. If you start off early and fast, neither you, your supporters, nor the crowd can sustain the pace. They become stale like an over-trained crew.

We started five days later, and the interval was spent quietly at home and with my two secretaries perfecting the details of our scheme,

booking committee rooms and halls for speaking. When we did start we were ready.

Everything was set in motion in twelve hours —committee rooms opened, canvassers called to Ward meetings, all the meetings to be held during the campaign announced, chairmen and speakers communicated with, and motor-car owners appealed to.

Oxford is divided into four Wards, and on the first night of the campaign I held a meeting of canvassers in each Ward. I explained to them what I conceived to be the proper way of canvassing, showed them a specimen of the card of introduction they were to take with them, which incidentally contained my photograph and ten reasons why I should be elected in preference to Mr. Marriott. As far as possible every document issued should, I suggest, have a photograph of the candidate upon it, whether he is good or ill-looking. It is like a trade-mark, for it helps to keep you continually before the public.

And now a word about canvassing. In an earlier chapter I have spoken of canvassing by a candidate, to which I may add the candidate's

wife, for I owe a great debt of gratitude to mine. Obviously to get the good, and, as I believe, the winning value from canvassing, there can be no substitute for the candidate and his wife, and the value of canvassing by them is far greater before than at the time of the election, for obviously you come when you "want something," and want it immediately. I was once unfairly accused by a good woman of only calling when I wanted a vote. The matter came to my ears, and thereafter whenever I was in her vicinity, sometimes three times a week, I would open her door without knocking or ceremony and say, "Here I am, Mrs. Willis, and I don't want anything." I never had a second complaint of the same kind from that district. With the best intentions in the world a candidate and his wife personally can only hope to cover by canvassing a small fraction of the average constituency of some fifteen thousand houses. The value of canvassing at the time of election by canvassers remains to be considered, and it is of the highest importance to consider this, because on the canvass turns the question of the use of motor-cars. I assisted at a bye-election at which we had no canvassers at all but a good supply of

cars. Whom were the cars to fetch? We neither knew the lame, the halt, and the blind, nor did we know our friends from our foes. The cars stood idle.

I believe canvassing will die out for want of canvassers, but till then what is its use? I think if it can be done fairly thoroughly and be widespread it is of value in getting people to the poll, but always provided care has been taken in selecting and instructing the canvassers. Bad canvassers may do a woeful amount of harm. The Conservative party will always be best supplied with canvassers, for in the nature of things they have got the largest supply of women with no occupation. These said women, who have no sympathy with the people they canvass and no knowledge of them, if active, may, by patronizing instead of canvassing, lose twenty-five votes in a morning. I could turn a number of villages I know Bolshevik if I was only allowed to send the Vicar's wife round to canvass for the Conservative party. I am not myself a convinced believer in a large number of people being engaged to go round to argue politics and give the views of the candidate. Many candidates cannot give their own views,

and in the hands of a heated, ill-advised and worse-instructed canvasser they become dreadful. Sometimes, however, you meet really good canvassers—even on the Conservative side. If canvassed by such an one myself, I always invite him to take wine with me and consume his evening talking politics. I advise all to do the same, for he would otherwise canvass perhaps fifty more houses.

In instructing canvassers I have always given them the following formula: "Mr. Blank would have liked to have called upon you himself, but it is not humanly possible for him to call upon all. He asked me, however, as an act of courtesy to you to call, and if there is any particular question you would like to ask him about, I will put the matter to him and if possible he will call." It is ten to one that the person canvassed will embark upon a conversation, and tell you what you want to know much more readily than if you put the direct question.

I have never asked when canvassing for whom a person was going to vote, nor asked for a vote, but I have marked my cards, and I believe accurately. The smiling girl who greets you at the door and says, "How are you, Mr. Gray?"

means the whole house votes for you whatever they may say to the contrary. On the other hand, the man who says, " You can absolutely rely upon my vote," may be marked " Doubtful " or " Against."

Canvassers should not urge their candidate to go and see " doubtful voters." There are some people who have a hobby of getting a candidate to go and see them. I think the practice is either a subtle and malicious method of punishing the candidate or arises from vanity. I had many lessons in this, and so will other candidates, for throughout the campaign they will receive little notes and messages, " Please do try to see Mrs. Jones, she is doubtful and she controls ten votes." Mrs. Jones is not doubtful. She is against you, and there is not one vote other than her own which she controls.

My first experience of canvassing as a candidate was of a man who knew more about politics than I. He argued with me for two hours, after which, realizing that, doubtful before, he was now determined to vote against me, I left like a limp rag unfit to do myself justice at a large meeting in the evening. My second was a publican who slammed the door in my face when I said, " I

think you want to see me," and the third was a woman, Mrs. Smith, obviously quite mad, living in a congested area. The next time I went down to the same district my friends the ladies who always greeted me at the doors as I passed said, "Ah, we have done with you; you can go and talk for half-an-hour and have tea with Mrs. Smith, who is going to vote against you, but you can never find time to come and talk to us."

Having started my canvassers upon their work, my task became easy and pleasant. My wife and I relied absolutely upon seven persons—including my agent, who kept me straight on all legal considerations, and my two secretaries, who saw that the scheme worked in fact as it appeared on paper. The seven had received a scheme of instructions beforehand, and I used to interview the seven each morning between nine and ten at my committee room and any other callers, and then I used to run away lest I be asked a lot of foolish questions or told irritating and depressing things. I used to motor round the constituency in the morning laughing, sleep happily in the afternoon, address one or more meetings in the evening and dictate replies to

questions and letters till the early hours of the morning.

There was no political wave my way, and in the early stages of this election I felt by no means certain that my work had borne fruit and was going to give me victory. My meetings at the outset were not too well attended and were not enthusiastic.

My opponent had given me one advantage at his first meeting. He had propounded what he termed an " All In " insurance scheme, which he evidently had intended to rely upon as a bombshell to win the election. My recollection is that the figures upon which the scheme was based would not bear too close an investigation. Sufficient allowance had not been made for the more fortunate section of the community which would not contribute, thereby increasing the burden to be borne by those who did, but in any case to rely at this date upon any such scheme as a vote-securing expedient showed a lamentable want of knowledge of the influences which operate upon the minds of the workers. At this date the workers give close scrutiny, as indeed do the employers, to the contribution which they are to make and are less enthusiastic about

benefits to be derived. To attack this scheme was my sheet anchor.

As the days of the campaign proceeded meetings improved, a little enthusiasm grew, but for evidence of the probable result the two days before polling day had to be waited for. At that date I held my final indoor meeting in the only large hall—the Town Hall—in Oxford. It was crowded to its utmost capacity and the enthusiasm was immense. Held as it was two days before polling day, the reports of this successful meeting had time to reach the voters, and it did impress them. I had had great difficulty in getting the hall for the night two nights before the poll. The Conservatives had always had this hall the night before the poll, and I was desperately anxious that they should do so again. Had they suspected I did not want it they would not have had it. However, they did not suspect it, and their agent was applauded in the Press for his ability in getting the hall for the last night. Their meeting when held was good, but not so good as mine, and there was more opposition. It mattered little, however, whether their meeting was good, bad or indifferent; it was too late to have any in-

fluence. To shut two thousand five hundred of your own supporters in a hall the night before the poll is futile, for those attending, chiefly your own friends, next go to bed, and there is not even time to go and talk it over in a public-house. By the time they are up again and spreading the reports, polling is in progress, and the die is cast.

Till the last day I had concealed what I proposed to do on the eve of the poll. I then suddenly announced sixteen open-air meetings with lorries and motor-cars, risking rain and fog. We had the latter. These meetings we carried into the poorest parts of Oxford. With sixteen of them scattered in a comparatively small area it was possible for persons to reach meeting after meeting, and the meetings were one triumphal procession. The effort to speak for five hours continuously, for that was what it meant, was tremendous, and my wife materially contributed to the success of the evening by holding a match in one hand and a flask of sherry in the other. It was estimated that while my opponent addressed twenty-five hundred indoors, I addressed twelve thousand out of doors, and of my crowd eight thousand may have been said to have had

no habitual political creed and were therefore to be won.

The evening concluded with a huge demonstration at the last meeting in St. Giles', a large main thoroughfare from whence the crowd surged with us to our hotel, leaving us in no doubt that we were victors.

The morrow in its early stages was not quite so encouraging. The election this year was on a Wednesday, the Oxford market day, and in the early part of it the centre of Oxford may be said to have contained three classes: those—and it is really a precise definition of a class—who are in a position to do their shopping in the morning, farmers, and the wives of the county clergy and others of the county. They wore blue (the Conservative colour) to a man, woman, child, dog and horse. My supporters were in a panic and I in a cold perspiration. Such is the power of ribbon.

In the afternoon a dramatic change took place. At this time some nine hundred Oxford voters, counting with their wives, etc., a two thousand voting strength, were waiting at the Didcot Depot and a special train brought them back in the afternoon. I went down personally to meet

the train accompanied by twelve lorries to convey voters to the twelve polling districts. Incidentally, and as intended, our lorries blocked the way of access of the Conservative cars to the station. As the train approached it was noticed that it had been literally limewashed with my colours, red and white, and every window contained my photograph, and every man on alighting was seen to be wearing my colours. The tide had turned. Those who counted—the workers of all classes—were on the move, and as the lorries rushed the voters to the polls the enthusiasm grew. Oxford had gone red.

At 7.20, forty minutes before the close of the poll, my last committee room sent word to me that they had closed down as all had voted who were available. We had established a new record: more than 21,000 out of 25,000 had voted.

The count alone remained, but it was only by a detour that the Town Hall could be reached, so vast was the crowd of enthusiastic waiters.

At the opening of the boxes, confident as I felt, I was not without anxiety, but the margin of 4,000 was large, and it was soon clear that the result was not in doubt.

My opponent refused to shake hands with me

or to be photographed—the only unpleasant feature of the election; and then my wife and I faced from the balcony of the Town Hall a surging and as it seemed single-minded crowd.

And then came a tour of the clubs. Victory after more than forty years! The enthusiasm of my supporters was beyond words.

During the contest the undergraduates ran an imaginary candidate, "Mr. Jorrocks," taking advantage, as they put it, of the weaknesses of the other two candidates. The Jorrocks' candidature put the crowds in high good humour, and so the undergraduates made both the police and the candidates indebted to them. To this indebtedness they added by entertaining the Chief Constable and myself the following night at dinner.

Chapter IX

THE ELECTION OF 1923

Elections, except for the irresponsible followers who wriggle with excitement akin to that of spectators at a bull-fight, are very exacting and punishing affairs, and for me this one was the most horrible of all—only indeed excelled in its horror by the ultimate results of the heat and passion aroused by it.

The only aspect which was both pleasant and easy was the issue—Free Trade versus Protection—gratuitously thrown down by Mr. Stanley Baldwin. Many have sought a reasonable explanation for the course he took, particularly those members of his own party who had just got into the House of Commons on a narrow majority. I venture to suggest that there is but one explanation, and that is that Mr. Baldwin was not capable of weighing the words of a leader and was more surprised than anybody to find

that he had precipitated a General Election. Apart from the advantage which Mr. Baldwin's selected issue gave to me, I faced this election with some difficulties. At the outset I was tired and unwell, but in the early taste of battle both fatigue and indisposition passed away. I faced a strong candidate in place of a weak candidate. I say strong advisedly, for he was produced at the last moment; he had stroked the Oxford boat to victory no fewer than four times, and had a wife with a title. We may sneer at titles, but these still have a value in politics, in society, and on company prospectuses; to-day it is still easier to rally a Conservative party round a Cecil than a Disraeli. Above all my opponent was not one—like his predecessor, Sir John Marriott—to make enemies by the lucid and clear enunciation of definite political beliefs. My present opponent, Captain Bourne, had, however, made the most convincing, the most overwhelming political assertion when he said, "I am a Conservative and my father and grandfather were Conservatives before me."

Strong candidates are not those with strongly pronounced views or of great political status in this age when dislikes count for more than likes.

Had Mr. A. J. (now Lord) Balfour and Mr. Asquith (now Lord Oxford) been less famous and been less lucid in their views they would never have been defeated at the polls. To-day if you fight for a cause you make enemies with every speech and every vote. You do not make corresponding friends. Lord Valentia represented Oxford for twenty years, and I doubt whether a living soul could repeat a political expression he uttered or name a vote he gave. The man who can get to a hundred flower shows, fifty football matches, and twenty cricket matches and make one hundred and fifty after-dinner speeches without disclosing a political conviction must be viewed as a strong candidate.

But the greatest enemy of all that I had to face was apathy. At the election a year before I had won a Conservative stronghold by a large majority. To accomplish this it had been necessary to stir the very passions of the people—it is easier to do so once than twice—and a fervour for a cause had been aroused. This was followed by the inevitable reaction, the inevitable apathy, and worse still, the blind belief in victory without effort. But soon apathy disappeared and victory was ultimately won, but it was won at the price of

passion and bitterness. Passion must, I think, have been aroused in any case at this election, when the party who had had an unexpected defeat a year before had sprung upon them an unexpected opportunity of retrieving it. There had been no passion at the election of 1922, for no Conservative leader expected me to win, and it was not until six weeks after my victory that my opponents realized that I had won.

The initial heat was soon fanned. I had made myself extremely unpopular in Northern Ireland. Although a politician, I had actually spoken the truth about these Northern settlers—this nomad race without pride of land—who attend church once a year on the Sunday preceding the 12th July before their annual feast in order to place on record a battle cry. In the House of Commons I had strenuously opposed the payment of English taxpayers' money for the maintenance—over and above all other obligations—of a marauding police force, some of whose crimes I had myself witnessed. This brought to Oxford four Ulstermen to speak violently in public and something worse in private against me. It is strange that any body of men who have even other people's money to spend could bring themselves to believe

that four strangers with a standard of education, higher, no doubt, but different from that in currency in the vicinity of Oxford, could possibly by their activities have any influence upon the election of an English Member of Parliament, saving to injure the party with which they were associated.

I made as much capital as I could—I even suggested fear of violence—and the police offered escort—a fine advertisement either for a candidate or a music-hall artist. To add reality I protested to my opponent—although I knew that nobody was less responsible than he for everything that did or did not take place at this election—and I wrote to the President of Magdalen College, Sir Herbert Warren, who with other Heads of Colleges was billed to speak at these Conservative meetings at which I was so freely reviled. At the evening meeting at which he was announced to speak the Irishmen were not permitted to say a word, but only to sit quite close to the President of Magdalen. I understand that the principal Irish speaker received an additional reward of office on his return to Belfast.

But the Irish issue was not long to hold the stage, for an issue of much greater reality to an

English constituency came to the fore. Mr. Baldwin had thrown down the gauntlet, or rather unwittingly dropped it, on the question of Protection. On this issue the repeal of the McKenna duties, which were deemed to give a protection on certain goods, might fairly be raised, for in the event of Mr. Baldwin's appeal failing, a Free Trade Government might well take the verdict of the country as a mandate to withdraw these duties, which had been agreed upon as a war-time expedient.

Mr. W. R. Morris, of Morris-Cowley fame, was interested in motor works, not in my constituency but near by, and, I believe, he claimed that the majority of his workers lived in Oxford. Before the war the works and business were of inconsiderable dimensions. During the war a large munition business was done there, and after the war Mr. Morris turned his attention to motor-cars, of which there was a rapidly increasing production.

Now Mr. Morris felt his business threatened by the possible repeal of the McKenna duties. His fears were ill-founded as subsequent events proved, but they were not the less real on this account. Mr. Morris, owing nothing to birth

or inheritance, showed himself a genius as a designer of cars. He also illustrated the limitations of genius, for while he was great in his own business, he lacked the very elements of political knowledge or wisdom. From the moment of Mr. Morris's intervention the international situation became of no account, the woes of the houseless, homeless and unemployed no longer concerned the electorate. Instead, Protection itself in its wider and national aspect paled before the one burning issue—Was Mr. Morris's industry to continue to have the advantage of a $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. import duty? Mr. Morris hereafter took the field in person to defend his industry, speaking at most meetings of the Conservative party, issuing his own propaganda, relegating the candidate to an inferior position, and claiming for himself both the tears and the cheers of the crowd.

A serious miscalculation had, however, been made in this line of campaign which the Conservatives at Oxford were careful to guard against at subsequent elections. The human aspect had not been considered or, if considered, not understood. The successful business or professional man cannot be readily moved to agitate

and fight for the interests of another man successful in war and peace, particularly when he claims that his success is due to a duty which protects him but not other people. Even the workers are not drawn to the support of other workers in a favoured industry. They are rather angered than pleased at the spectacle of men enjoying better conditions than themselves, whatever may be the cause. And here surely is a sharp lesson for politicians.

So far as I was concerned, the one great danger I feared, the danger of apathy, had now passed. The passions aroused had brought the issues to the electors more effectively than canvassers could have hoped to do.

It was at this juncture that I was led to express to my wife the view that we had complained of the apathy and indifference of the people in politics in the past, but that now we appeared to have opened the gates of political emotions to a degree that we could neither control nor direct. In the past persons had preferred to pay 5*s*. for a seat in a theatre to going to a meeting for nothing. Now the business of theatres was suspended while men and women fought for standing space in the meetings. It did not matter how many

meetings I announced in one evening; a surging mass would block the way to every entrance to the room in which I was to speak.

Was it political enlightenment that was being sought? or was it the love of the Englishman for a fight—a trait too frequently forgotten by peaceful highbrows in calculating the result of an election? If the latter the goods were delivered. Bands of hooligans—strangers to Oxford—endeavoured to break up all my meetings, but the very excitement which they caused ensured crowds of fair-minded electors attending to outnumber and overawe the hooligans, who arrived with cornets and other instruments they dared not use or produce. The climax was reached, chairs were broken, heads were broken, and the very fabric of buildings was damaged; and then the anti-climax. Two days before the election, following my practice of not holding indoor meetings the day preceding polling day, I hastily called a meeting in the Town Hall, giving only forty-eight hours' notice. I feared a poor meeting as a result even in the excitement. I was mistaken. An hour and a half before the hour of the meeting crowds began to collect, the doors were opened by the direction of the police and

stewards fought to get a footing on the staircase. Then an extra room, the Assembly Room, was thrown open and after that the Drill Hall—the latter a vast hall without furniture or ornament; and here, with the aid of a table pushed through a doorway, Mr. C. H. Brown, a local councillor, claiming no art of speaking, managed in the wild confusion that now prevailed in the Municipal Buildings to hold the crowd while I addressed the other two meetings. His eloquence but not his courage failing him, he resorted to the original idea of calling for volunteer speakers in the room, and immediately a gifted don of Christ Church stepped forward and achieved the impossible, for for thirty minutes he held as if spellbound, by a closely reasoned speech on economics, a crowd thirsting for battle.

And at the other meetings, too, disorder had given place to listening and applause.

We had complained of apathy, and yet, on leaving the third of these meetings indoors, I addressed an overflow in the street, and then I went to Cowley outside the Morris Works to keep a promise to speak there though I had refused to speak in the Works. I arrived two hours late, at half-past ten. The crowd was immense and

had been held by the chairman, a councillor and an undergraduate—the undergraduates were always my gallant friends—who made five-minute speeches against time and exhaustion.

At this meeting on arrival I had been rather badly hit, but the meeting ended on the best of terms, and I had no need of the assistance of a team of young men who had harnessed themselves into a bodyguard and cycled out from Oxford, when they heard how things were going, to see fair play.

The night before the poll, meetings resembled and exceeded those of the previous election, and these, the great meeting at the Town Hall which I have just described, and the evident loyalty of the workers left me in no doubt as to the result. But the other side up to the last moment believed that victory would be theirs, even to the extent of purchasing bouquets which could not be distributed. They will never learn that three votes in one room in the slums are greater than two votes in sixteen rooms in a "residential" quarter.

I had won by some 2,600, a diminished majority on an increased electorate and on a percentage of votes which was even higher than before.

But my vote had remained within 200 of its previous record, which is instructive, for the Morris men were my great supporters at the previous election, and on these figures the great majority of them must again have voted for me. Some indeed had the courage to display favours for me, but this was against my advice.

Chapter X

THE ELECTION OF 1924

My fourth election fight was for Central Portsmouth. I embarked upon it at the last moment,—after I had refused constituencies and decided not to stand again, at least on this occasion, —at an urgent invitation over the telephone by the local people at Portsmouth on the faith of a speech I had made there in the summer.

This last political adventure differed from the others. Unlike my experience at Watford, I went to find ready at my hand a first-class organization in the hands of a representative executive of high standing and an efficient and clever agent, and, unlike my experience at Oxford, I had no previous knowledge of the constituency. Again, this was unlike the previous contests in that I went to hold a seat already Liberal, and the invitation to me was backed by Sir Thomas Bramsdon, who had been the sitting Member until the election and now retired.

Sir Thomas Bramsdon was genial and moderate in thought, but above all he was a lovable man. He was a popular local figure, respected by all and liked by most, even by those who did not support him in his views. My greatest asset was to have his warm support throughout, for which I desire to express my gratitude.

I had other assets. I had an election committee representative of all classes, each member a success in his class and his walk, each able to contribute in help and organization, and, what is far more important, each actually and faithfully discharging the duty he undertook. The candidate has many dangers and difficulties to face. They include the proffered help by the persistent incompetent, and the proffered help by the competent which he does not accord. The latter is the more dangerous.

Above all I had the help of Mr. Edgar Butler of whom I have spoken in a previous chapter, the agent, a quiet, almost sleepy man, a man in touch and popular with those who were not necessarily of his party; a man who was always at his post and yet knew all that was going on outside, especially in the enemy headquarters, or rather what was not going on there. He seemed

to have supplied himself with a perfect secret service; above all he had the rare gift of attracting to his ranks those who could and would help, and, in political circles, the rarer gift of preventing himself from being impeded by the help of the helpless.

As at Watford I had two opponents, Labour and Conservative, Captain Hall and Sir Harry Foster, and, as at Watford, the Labour man was superior to his two competitors in ability, knowledge, and the power to do something if returned to Parliament. In conversations which I had with him I only detected one fault, and that he was a little overawed and overwhelmed by the knowledge of his own righteousness. We were level in that we were all three strangers; I, late perhaps, was nevertheless the first to be in the field.

Supported by a real organization and by an agent and committee, I had nothing to do but the legitimate work of a candidate. My organization may not have been as complete as at Oxford, where everybody was canvassed at least twice by an enthusiast, but it was entitled to call itself an organization.

My legitimate duties were canvassing, attending meetings and speaking. At the time of an elec-

tion, canvassing by the candidate and his wife is much more likely to be productive of votes than canvassing by others, however skilled. I would urge, therefore, all candidates and their wives to cover as large an area as possible. The work is tiring, perhaps exhausting, but it is at least instructive and more profitable than sitting in a committee room arguing with members of the committee, or with the impossible people who will call in the course of the morning to tell you that they will vote against you whatever your views may be upon the international and national situations, providing you are not prepared to vote for a measure of relief for underfed cats or the withdrawal of an ambassador from Rome. I have often wondered how these electors vote when encouraged by none of the candidates.

This brings me to the second duty, that of answering questions, particularly written questions submitted to candidates. In these days a candidate might almost give the whole of his time up to the answering of questions. No sooner has a candidate been adopted than questions arrive—questions written, questions typed, questions printed, questions from electors, questions from organizations, finally, questions from your own

constituency and questions from somebody else's constituency.

The limits of human endurance demand that some distinction should at least be made in dealing with these questions, but in dealing with them their volume is not the only consideration. The experience of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald after the election of 1923 should serve as a very healthy lesson, not only to himself but to all candidates, for in these rapid days of change anybody least expecting it may become Prime Minister by accident. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald had returned emphatic and indeed popular replies with regard to ranker officers and the dismissal of striking policemen and warders, and on accepting office it only remained for him to fulfil or attempt to fulfil his promises—a not discouraging prospect inasmuch as the majority of the Members of the House had given the same promises. Perhaps, however, he doubted his ability to carry a majority when he reflected that in the previous Parliament most of the Conservatives had pledged themselves in clear-written terms to support the reduction of the amusement tax and then voted in favour of its continuance, or remembered how in the Anderson Report Case the majority of the Con-

servatives ran away from the House of Commons, mindful of their written promises, and brought about the defeat of the party. Whatever may have been his reflections, Mr. MacDonald cut, and this not for the first time, a very sorry figure on this matter in the House of Commons while many of the Members of the House fluttered a printed copy supplied to them by interested parties of his written word. Mr. MacDonald has many good points, but courage is not one of them. He is capable of a half-truth and a wriggle—the latter on this occasion. Incidentally, herein he disclosed to the world what many had long suspected, that the permanent officials at Whitehall are greater and more powerful than Prime Minister or Cabinet. You see "they know" —which places them in a powerful position.

During one of my campaigns I was urged to go and see a political supporter. Candidates are always being urged to go and see somebody. He was an ex-Indian Civil servant of high degree, possessed a title, and, moreover, had an estate and property. Said my adviser, "Go and see him and he is sure to support you, and he has a lot of influence." I said, "I will go and see him, but before I start I will bet you ten to one he is a

Conservative and will be against me." I went to him and begged his support. "Yes," said he, "I am going to support you although I am not your way of thinking." I thanked him and said, "I thought perhaps you were a Conservative." "No," he said, "I am Labour, but there is no Labour man standing." "Oh," replied I, "I should have thought you would have been a little afraid of Labour and have had no confidence in them." "Nor have I," he retorted, "even less confidence than in your party and the Conservatives, but I have unbounded belief in the present officials, and they will be less interfered with by Labour than any other party."

I have known candidates who refused to answer all questions. In my view this is a mistake, particularly if they are faced by a competitor who understands his business. Indeed it may be a fatal mistake in the absence of a political wave in your favour. With a few exceptions I ignore all questions which do not come from an address within my constituency, unless I have the time to indulge in a saucy answer. Particularly I delight to ignore or give a saucy answer to any questioner emanating from a London address. There are a number of organizations—"anti" organizations

(anti-rates, taxes, Labour, Communism) and "pro" organizations (pro Empire, the Navy, the family, and the simple life)—organizations which furnish more or less remunerative occupation for a secretary, and give other officials a position, or it may be an opportunity for occasionally getting away from their wives. The questions to candidates and the replies of candidates are the only reality on which some of these associations rely for the continuance of their subscriptions. The Primrose League has a foundation little better than these, except that it has a few titles associated with it.

Questions that are answered must be answered carefully and a copy of the replies kept for further reference.

It must be remembered that it is the right of electors to ask questions, and in these days they will ask them at meetings. Some candidates do their best to evade them, chiefly because they do not know the answer or because they have a well-founded belief that they have only to be asked enough questions to be hopelessly out of their depth. Commander C. B. Fry, with whom I was associated in one or two elections, had among other merits the courage, if he could not answer a

question, to say so. "Bowled," he would cry, "middle stump." I used to encourage my audiences, particularly at this election at Portsmouth, to ask questions and make interruptions as my speech proceeded. I have been severely rebuked by chairmen for this free-and-easy way of turning a meeting into a bear garden, but I found, particularly at Portsmouth, where hecklers are many and good, that by giving them rope I at least avoided the necessity of preparing a speech —never to be delivered. The hecklers made my speech for me as I went along, and it is easier to answer questions in running comments than in cold blood at the end.

The elector asserts not only his right to ask questions but to pledge a candidate to do certain things if he is returned to Parliament. An elector is certainly entitled to know whether, for instance, he is supporting a candidate who will vote for Protection, although I have never known a Conservative candidate able to bring himself to a definite pledge on the subject. Save the unhappy example of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, many candidates have endeavoured to evade pledges. I am against this as a general attitude even on the ground of tactics, but there are occasions when

more is to be gained in refusing to reply than by replying. I always refuse to reply to the questions of the Temperance party and the licensed victuallers for two different reasons. I explain fully my views in speeches. I know that the Temperance party will not even pass a resolution in my favour if I agree to 99 out of 100 points, for, as I tell them, they would wreck the whole ship of progress rather than throw one item of baggage overboard. Moreover, the individual members of the Temperance party, whatever resolution is passed, will vote on general party lines.

At a deputation at which I pointed out that it seemed to me that it was unwise to pursue a course which must inevitably combine the brewers, liquor merchants, clubs and licensed victuallers against us, a distinguished bishop said, "We like to get all against us. We glory in it." I retorted that I admired the spirit but I was dishonest enough to want to carry a practical point. And be it noted that this bishop of the Church of England would in any case, had he had a vote, have recorded it against me in favour of the brewers' nominee, even if he had been a party to a temperance resolution supporting me.

On the other hand, I do not reply to any questions from the licensed victuallers. Immediately before an election the Licensed Victuallers' Association held a dinner presided over by the brewer's manager, for the brewers in many cases run the Association financially and otherwise. At this dinner, pursuing their practice, they invited all the Conservative Members and candidates and left out the Liberals and Labour, and immediately after sent me a list of questions. I replied that I assumed when they issued invitations to their dinner they had satisfied themselves of my views, and I attached a spirit of reality to replies. I had better, therefore, not reply at this date. I added that whatever they thought of my views they had better pass a resolution against me if they valued their tenancies at the hands of the brewers.

I know all about their methods, for in my professional days I used to act for many licensed victuallers and sometimes for the brewers. I view the position of the licensed victuallers as a first cousin to the serfdom of old. They are held by a tenancy agreement which assures their subservience, frequently too by a loan—which they like till they are called upon to repay. They are

compelled to sell beer while in certain districts their neighbours at three times the rent are making a fortune with cafés selling tea. The brewers watch the returns of a house and know by the increase that the place is being used for betting, and when the tenant is found out by the police, they give him notice to quit before he has been tried, and let the magistrates know that they have done it so as to ensure his conviction in advance. Then they, the brewers, ask for a renewal of the licence and urge their drastic action at the expense of the tenant as a ground for getting it. Usually they do get it.

I don't object to the brewers so much because they sell beer as because they don't. When the licensed victuallers and the public appreciate how fully they have been exploited by the brewers, the dawn of temperance reform will be at hand.

The licensed victuallers passed an almost if not quite unanimous resolution to oppose me; but 50 per cent. of those who had voted for the resolution voted for me.

The last of my three duties was to speak at meetings. The polling day of this election was Wednesday, the 29th October. The date is important. Up to the previous Thursday my

meetings had gone particularly well, and my canvass returns were quite as satisfactory. The attendance at meetings, good at the start, improved daily—a favourable sign. On this Thursday I had a number of meetings all crowded, and at the largest and principal meeting Dr. A. E. W. Hazel, Vice-Principal of Jesus College, Oxford, and a former member for West Bromwich—by the way the most effective speaker to a crowd I have ever heard—after the meeting observed, "You are winning here more easily than you ever did at Oxford." So it appeared. On Friday night my meetings, and I held several, were not nearly so well attended and enthusiasm had given place to cold criticism, and on the Saturday morning my canvass results compared very unfavourably with the earlier returns. I told my President and agent on this Saturday morning that all the evidence pointed to our being third on the poll, a view with which they were disposed to agree. Be it noted that the Zinovieff disclosures were made this day, and I was influenced by something that had already happened. A national wave—that feeling which affects all constituencies—was swamping us. The country was asking for a stable Government other than one pledged to lending

money to Russia. The Liberals clearly could not deliver the goods, for they had not the candidates to do it. I agreed, after consultation with my committee, to make the attempt of speaking to workers at the docks. I was accompanied by one who worked there himself—a clever man and a great speaker—one of the gifted men England produces without aiding. He said on the way down, " If you can stick it for three days you will be all right, but if you start to-day you must see it through, or it would be better if you never started." The first day was not too encouraging and was productive of one ugly incident over and above the flying questions, attacks and jeers. Distracted by a man a few yards away who made a noise like a fog-horn, I shouted, " If you can't stand silent, come and sit in my car and see if that will help." He at once advanced to the car, and before I knew what I had done he was on the splashboard and in possession of the meeting. I was standing on the back seat, and without thought I seized him by the throat and pushed him over the door of the car. He fell, big man as he was, and was firmly wedged, apparently immovably, between lever and steering-wheel on the one side and the seat on the other. For a few seconds the

situation looked ugly. White angry faces surged forward, and then the sporting spirit prevailed, and the crowd laughed at the misfortune of their friend. He was extricated from his trussed position. Thereafter at all my meetings he was present in a prominent position. He used to shake hands, and tell my audience he should disagree with all I said, but that I was a sportsman and ought to be listened to.

Each day after this my meetings here got a little more friendly. I used now a megaphone, which helped, but they were never enthusiastic till the Monday before the election. I had a pitch about one hundred yards from the Labour pitch, and the size of the respective crowds was two to one in favour of Labour.

On the Monday after the Zinovieff letter, when I arrived at the docks after the Labour man had started, all his crowd immediately came to my crowd. The Labour man left and I had the whole crowd, and for the first and last time it was enthusiastic. I went back to my committee room and told my agent of the occurrence, and we agreed that even now I might be second and possibly first if I could gain Labour votes faster than I lost Liberal votes to the Conservatives. On

the following day, Tuesday, my crowd was no larger and no more enthusiastic than in the previous week. Labour had regained its confidence and abandoned its fears. Indeed it was firmer in its faith in face of what it believed to be "another Tory trick."

This letter had little effect, and such as it did have was contrary to the intention and desires of those who sought to determine an election by it. It weakened the Liberal Party a little more, and if anything hardened and strengthened the Labour Party, and probably assured their agreement and power at the next election, the last thing the publishers desired.

The Labour Party went to the country on two issues: the Campbell case and the proposal to lend money to Russia. The Campbell case was not important, for the public are not very enthusiastic about the prosecution of an individual journalist on an unknown paper. They would much prefer to see the joint prosecution of the editors of the *Daily Mail* and *Morning Post.* The proposal to lend money to Russia was a far more important matter, and anything less popular to propose I cannot imagine. Moreover, the Labour Party went to the country from office—

never a good credential—if not from power. These things being so, how many seats did they lose on account of the Zinovieff letter? They only lost about 40 out of a total 190, while the Liberals lost over a hundred from a smaller number.

I was beaten heavily by both Conservative and Labour opponents, but—after the first ten days of campaigning—not unexpectedly.

It may be interesting to note in conclusion that in my constituency, a naval port, Labour in face of the Russian loan and Zinovieff letters polled 20 per cent. more votes than before, indeed the Labour vote in this naval port has increased 20 per cent. each election since 1918.

Chapter XI

IN PARLIAMENT

The House of Commons is a very interesting place by virtue of those who get there. The House has become more interesting in recent times through the advent of the Labour Party, made originally possible by the finances of Trade Unions and the payment of Members of Parliament. Twenty years ago there was no door open by which the Rt. Hons. J. H. Thomas, Stephen Walsh, and Arthur Henderson and Mr. George Buchanan, Mr. David Kirkwood and Mr. Wheatley could enter the House. In the days of Disraeli and Gladstone it was easy to cut some sort of figure in the House, for in the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed man is king. In those days the House was largely recruited from a narrow and short field, viz. the sons of the landed class—people not necessarily clever—and the limited few, the *nouveaux riches* of the days when

the barriers of the aristocracy were higher and the opportunities of making money fewer. It is too often forgotten that by the rule of democracy, coupled with a great circulation of money, there are still the rich and more rich. At best progressive democracy as now developed simply replaces one set of rich by another set of rich. The former don't like the changes, the latter do. In olden days the few *nouveaux riches* were a more noticeable and beneficial leaven than now--they were so rare as to be acceptable to society on the same basis that it is quite the thing in all circles to entertain a black man if he is a prince. Let it not be thought that I seek to belittle the memory of Disraeli—a man indeed of origin and achievement appealing immensely to the democrat—and Gladstone, nor that I distinguish between them and the leaders of the day when I entered Parliament. In all circles and all times there are men who arise to tower over their fellow-men; they are the despair of the levelling theorist—Socialist or Communist. We see Mr. J. H. Thomas the outstanding figure in every assembly he enters. He is so great that it is as unnecessary for him to attract notice by dropping his h's as it is essential for Mr. Austen Chamberlain to impersonate his

great father in order to get into a Cabinet. Mr. Thomas must be the despair not only of the Locomotive Engineers' Union, but of the whole Trade Union world.

In the Parliament which I entered Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. J. H. Thomas were there of the ten super-men, Lord Birkenhead was one of the ten in the House of Lords, and the remaining five must have been in commerce, the navy or the army, notably the former. At all events they were not in the House of Commons.

Mr. Bonar Law was a man of ability of the first order. He would stand at the dispatch box and with suavity and without a note would deal with a matter of international concern in the hour of crisis. He had the rarest gift of all in a great man, the power to disarm opposition by tact and kindness rather than by the use of power. As a young Member I would put down a question to the Prime Minister, intent upon following it up with a nasty supplementary question which I and not he had had time to think about. His reply to my first question would make me hastily abandon the idea of putting the second, not only because to put a nasty question after his answer

would have been against the sense of the House, but also because I myself felt I wanted to help him rather than hinder him even if I could. Mr. Asquith (to-day Lord Oxford) when history is written will be accorded the highest position as politician and statesman. He might have been in law more than a Jessel and he would have been the greatest Master of Balliol. Above all he possessed the power of " making " his immediate followers, particularly the young man, the new-comer. Had fortune ordained that he should have died on his way to the conquest of the North Pole, it would have been found that his young lieutenants had elected to die with him rather than to push on and claim laurels for themselves. Mr. Asquith is one of the few men who is a " highbrow " and a man of the world at the same time. He is the sort of man one goes to when in trouble. I went to him myself. By the way, Mrs. Asquith would have disturbed and unhinged society whether she had operated in Paris, Berlin or London, and we should all have been excited and happy with her.

Mr. Lloyd George knows nothing because he has never in his studies of success had time to learn anything. It never has been and never will

be necessary for him to know anything, because he has the great gift of using the knowledge of others and concealing from them and others how little he knows himself, and of disposing of such little knowledge as he possesses in the best possible market. It is in vain we grow the best orchids if we don't know where to sell them. I knew an engineer who spent thirty years attending lectures and passing examinations to train himself, and I knew another who went out to dinners to meet people who had the power to give out engineering work. The first finished up a most competent assistant engineer of a great concern, so competent that his chief could spend his time at dinners, while the other finished up chairman of a number of big companies requiring practical knowledge which he could ill provide. Mr. Lloyd George, if he deemed it desirable, would cut off his hair and his moustache and take charge on the bridge of the flag-ship without even the captain finding out that he knew nothing about his job, but Mr. Lloyd George would have found out how much the flag captain knew, for upon this his own success would depend. Mr. Lloyd George is just the leader with whom I should like

to be closely associated. We might easily be on the top, and in any case we should have some very exciting times.

Mr. J. H. Thomas has had the most difficult ladder of all to climb in order to arrive at the top. He is one of those great men who do not allow the memory of the route by which they came to embarrass them. It is by no means easy to forget you are a Trade Unionist, and still more difficult to make those you lead and those you oppose forget that you are. But Mr. Thomas has succeeded in both tasks.

I entered the House of Commons in 1922 under the best possible conditions for a beginner, a member of a party or faction of sixty—a number large enough to be counted and to secure a definite position to sit and take part in debate, and not large enough to supply too many competitors. I purposely exclude the National Liberals for reasons to be explained.

The worst position for the new-comer is to be one of the party in power if it has a clear majority. If you enter as one of 400 Conservatives, only as an F. E. Smith can you succeed—with great ability coupled with the self-confidence and per-

sistency needed to push, and to push constantly, your competitors, and if need be your leaders, out of your way.

With a party of sixty your leaders want you to put up a show for the party, and they don't care how bad a show you put up providing they don't associate themselves with you. The clever leader watches and associates himself with you when you succeed. This is the art of leading. My leaders always were encouraging the young new-comers to make speeches, when it was not safe for themselves, and to ask questions which they would not themselves have asked. In these circumstances you can win—I have done it—the coy and secret smile of approval from your leaders.

It is not quite the same if you are on the Government side, one perhaps of three or four hundred. You won't win any smiles or nods of approval by putting either a clever or a silly question to a Minister, nor will the Whips of your party thank you for a speech, however illuminating, when they are wondering how they are going to get through the essential business of the House.

Providentially in every majority there is a large percentage with neither the ability nor desire to

become prominent in any way. Leave them alone and they will go off quite quietly to dine in Club society or the Ladies' Room at the Commons. Their victories lie in other fields.

You can always make your maiden speech, for a much-respected custom offers you both the opportunity of speaking and encouragement when speaking. Mine was very bad. I did not need to be told so, but an official reporter—the greatest and most experienced of critics—in the House dining-room the same evening said to me, "This was not the Frank Gray that beat Marriott at Oxford."

No Member need despair about his maiden effort. The test is—Can he make a second speech in spite of the failure of the first, and can he make a third in spite of the failure of the first two? Men will fail notwithstanding a brilliant maiden speech. The very success endangers them, and they teach the House to expect what they can't deliver. Many have succeeded after a failure and many have failed after success. The great man makes the great maiden speech and sustains his reputation. I would advise every average new Member to get his maiden speech over as soon as possible, and above all to make it as short

as possible. Above all I advise, Don't put your wife in the Strangers' Gallery to hear you do it, for it only adds to the pain of all present, particularly yours and hers.

The greatest quality for the average Member to possess is that of persistency. Keep on trying; be always at hand ready to participate; work at things you know will come on sooner or later; study the procedure and you will know something nine-tenths of the Members don't. If you do this you will get not one chance but many chances, and you will succeed in making some sort of position and get some sort of footing whatever your shortcomings may be. You will outdistance both competitors on your own side and opponents, for so few can command the persistency the House demands.

Other qualities may prevail to obtain for you the "ear of the House," but these are determined by ability. The House will always consent to be amused and it does not take much to amuse it. Men who have been sitting for hours in a depressing atmosphere, many overwrought by the anticipation of their own speeches and the boredom produced of other people's, will readily laugh at very little, as a man wet and hungry in a

trench would drink bad tea with a relish. The House, too, is always ready to learn, but on its own terms. Members will listen to something they don't know providing you tell them it in such a way as makes them believe that you believe that they already know. That is why a Professor can never succeed in the House of Commons—they suspect he is going to teach them before he starts. It is pathetic to watch men of the standing of Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, who knows far better than I the qualities which command success, endeavouring to pretend he is not so learned as the rest of the House, and the rest of the House in resentment because of their instinctive feeling of his superiority.

Members of the Opposition had in this Parliament following the election of 1922 afforded to them opportunities in that they faced in the House of Commons chiefly Under-Secretaries of a Government described by Lord Birkenhead as of second-rate brains. There were few Members on the Opposition side who could not get up and tease, cheek and usually embarrass the front benchers of the Government.

In their horror at seeing our small fry make sport and pleasure with their own front bench the

Conservative rank and file used to look wistfully at the little group of Bonar Law dissentients on the third bench below the gangway immediately under the eye of that great parliamentarian, Sir Frederick (now Lord) Banbury, who viewed with contempt all sections of his party. This group consisted of Mr. Austen Chamberlain, Sir Robert Horne, Sir Ernest Pollock (now Master of the Rolls) and their sprightly little A.D.C., Sir Kingsley Wood. But those who as spectators saw most of the game knew that this group was scarcely likely to provide better material than the front bench. Mr. Austen Chamberlain possesses all the arts and crafts of a parliamentarian as a result of long experience and thoughtful study, and has succeeded by play-acting and featuring his father in obtaining Cabinet rank at different times without bringing with him the reality of ability to justify the position, while his brother Mr. Neville Chamberlain, who on this occasion had taken his brother's birthright, had been one of the few real successes in the Government, judged on the basis that he was one of the few who at some stage or another in the life of this short Administration did not come to major or minor grief. Sir Robert Horne had been too

successful to wish to submit himself to indignities which further success would have involved. Sir Ernest Pollock by his austere appearance, heavy manner and absence of ideas convinced all, and the last of these himself, that he was a lawyer and not a statesman or even parliamentarian, while Sir Kingsley Wood, had he had a bolder appearance, a heavier frame, and a deeper voice, might have had the power to lead others in the direction in which he desired to go.

The front bench of this Government was very weak, but in truth there was not the material on the Conservative side with which to strengthen it. In turn Mr. Baldwin, Earl Winterton, Major A. Boyd Carpenter, Sir P. Lloyd-Graeme, Sir R. Saunders, Sir M. Barlow, Major Tyron and Captain Craig became discomfited in the conduct of affairs in the House, while Sir D. Hogg, a new-comer showing skill and ability above the more experienced of his party, came to grief in conjunction with Mr. Bridgeman over the Irish deportees. It was felt that the front bench must be strengthened, and Mr. Baldwin resorted to strange means to do it. Lord Robert, now Viscount Cecil had made a speech in the House of Commons in which, to those inexperienced like

myself of the exact meaning of words, he appeared to throw the League of Nations overboard in favour of the Conservative party and the traditions of the Cecil family. No man less conscious of his own infallible righteousness would have accepted office after this, for there had already been nasty cries on the floor of the House of " Office " during the delivery of the speech. Viscount Cecil, however, felt the call strong within him to save the country as only a Cecil can do, and at the moment conceived that the best way of doing so was to strengthen the front bench. Quite gratuitously he selected an early opportunity of showing the front bench how things should be done, for he led the House in the passage of the Irish Deportees Indemnity Bill. No one but a Cecil also would have been capable of making the sacrifice to lead in a matter in which only failure could be achieved. He gave us the impression throughout that the highest motives and need for self-sacrifice had actuated him in placing himself in an obviously inferior position. The strengthening of the front bench in this way provided the most ghastly failure of an unfortunate Government in the conduct of the business. A handful of inexperienced Liberal and Labour men took

charge of the Opposition. An all-night sitting was determined upon by this handful with amazing results. Amendments were carried to clauses already abandoned, and the Government tabled fresh amendments of which they were totally unable to explain the meaning, for in truth they had no meaning. Mr. W. R. M. Pringle at a later date explained that he had pointed out at the time that they were passing "ridiculous nonsense."

So did the members of this Government fail individually and collectively. Their cup of bitterness was full on the occasion of their defeat in connection with the Anderson Report—not a snap division, but brought about partly by the then irritated and disgruntled rank and file of the Conservative party who absented themselves, and partly by the mistake of that charming and usually efficient Chief Whip, Sir Leslie Wilson, who permitted a division to take place twenty minutes earlier than the time at which he had told his followers to be back from dinner in the House. It was on this defeat that Mr. W. R. M. Pringle without forethought or preparation, delivered as brilliant and as scathing an attack as any that a front bench of a Government has had blushingly to sit and listen to. It was rich in quotation and

bitter in its scorn. Mr. Pringle is a man of outstanding ability coupled with industry and knowledge. He has but one fault: the absence of power to resist scoring a victory over his opponents. There are occasions when in parliamentary life victories can be bought too dearly. Too frequently under his tuition in this and the next Parliament we got a debating victory which was not too helpful to the victors.

Chapter XII

IN PARLIAMENT AGAIN

By the election of 1923 a third of the personnel of the House of Commons was changed. It will ever be a matter of debate whether the Liberals under the leadership of Mr. Asquith, assisted, too, by Mr. Lloyd George, made a mistake when, as it is said, they "put the Labour Party in office." Personally I believe that there was no other course which the Liberal Party could have taken. It is perhaps arguable that the Liberals were placed in circumstances in which whatever they did would have been wrong, and if this be so I think they wisely chose the lesser of two evils. I think it may be maintained that to take the course they did was immediately bad and ultimately right. I feel that had they taken the other course the result would ultimately have been fatal to them, whether the course they took was bad immediately or ultimately. I have never myself been able to see that the Liberal Party could

possibly justify its existence by any association with the Conservative Party or with any of its aims and views.

The Conservative and Liberal parties and the minds that compose them are making for different goals. On the other hand, the Liberal Party and the Labour Party seek the same goal—the uplifting of the less fortunate at the expense if need be of the more fortunate, but they seek the same goal by different routes. The Conservative Party seek to protect the fortunate, conceding as little as may be necessary to strengthen their protection against the power of an unhappy people.

The effect of a united effort in the time of war, followed by a variety of coalitions and co-operations of interests in and out of Parliament in politics and commerce, have led a number of persons to believe that they can take a part of what they believe to be the Conservative outlook and a part of what they believe to be the Liberal outlook. It cannot be done because the two parties want different things. But no doubt the people who want to make the best of both political worlds will do well to join the Conservative Party, and leaven it in the direction

of greater concessions and generosity. It is to the interest of the Liberal Party that they should go, for there is no future for a Liberal Party whose policy is, in fact, a sort of piebald Conservatism. When I want a bit of Imperialism or a touch of safeguarding of industries, I shall vote for a Conservative and not a Liberal, just as if I want Free Trade I shall vote for a Liberal and not a Free Trade Conservative. Indeed this is the teaching of the elections. Neither the leaders of the Conservative Party nor their followers will like you the more if you concede nine-tenths of their views, if the tenth you do not concede is the view which they regard as the most important for tactical or other reasons at the moment. They rightly want one of their own kind—I want the same—and they will only plead for your help when in fear of an enemy, whether German or our own working Socialists—they fear both equally—or when they think they have not got a chance of winning themselves. The Conservatives would even stand aside for me in a constituency, but only when convinced that I should win even if they put up a candidate. This was the difficulty with the National Liberals in the last Parliament. I get on well with most

of the people who differ from me, but I felt that with the National Liberals it was no question of leadership, but that many of the followers themselves were different. They liked the popularity of Imperialism and they were also distrustful of the people. These are the views of Conservatives, and may be right. But they are not the views of Liberals, and the Liberal Party has no future in advancing them. The Conservative Party will perform the task infinitely better. Captain F. Guest desires the respectability of the Conservatives and the glamour of the democrats. It would be very nice if it could be got, but it cannot, and he had better go to the Conservatives.

However, the die was cast for good or evil, the meeting of the party was held at the National Liberal Club presided over and addressed by Mr. Asquith, and without reservation the reunion which had taken place on paper immediately before the election was consummated. It was an incident for which nobody must be blamed, but it was very damaging to the Liberal Party. Huge sections of the public believed the "Wee Frees" to be honest and eccentric before reunion. After reunion they believed them dishonest and eccentric.

The meeting was dramatic, for here was the birth of the first Labour Government of England. The debate in the following January in the House was dead in advance.

And now for a new order of things with the first Labour Government. The first difficulty and consideration was a practical one. Where were the Liberals to sit? Previously sharing the Opposition with Labour, the front Opposition bench above the gangway was divided between the leaders of the two parties, and the followers of the Labour Party were above the gangway and the Liberals of all denominations below the gangway. Even so the "Wee Frees" and National Liberals had managed to keep apart. On the footing that we were to give general support to the party we had put in office, it was decided that we should sit on the Government side of the House but below the gangway, but then a practical difficulty arose, for Mr. Asquith had been so long accustomed to speak from one dispatch box or the other that it was felt he would be hampered by speaking with nothing in front of him—it is always an ordeal to speak with nothing in front of you—one of the discomfiting features of speaking in the House of Commons.

At first Mr. Asquith spoke from his seat and later crossed to the Opposition dispatch box from which to speak; and be it noted that during the Parliament of 1924, at all events during the first part of which I am able to speak, Mr. Asquith by common consent delivered speeches more attractive and more acceptable to all than any other Member of the House.

Places of speaking, conditions and atmosphere are important considerations to all—and perhaps even more to experienced speakers than to others.

It will be conceded by everybody that Mr. Lloyd George is a speaker and debater far above the average in the House of Commons, and on occasions he has proved himself to be a giant in the handling of the House. Yet in the Parliament following the election of 1922 there were few, even including novices, who failed in that Parliament as he did. He knew it. He used to sit in front of me below the gangway, in his original seat in the House, but one which he had not occupied for many years. On occasions when it was believed he was going to speak, I watched him nervously toy with his notes and restlessly move and finally go out without delivering the speech. Why should this be with the

veteran warrior of debate? Because he had "no house," and he could only thrive with "a house"; with applause and with no interruptions on his own side of the House. There was no applause and there was a flow of Labour interruptions. No applause, not because Mr. Lloyd George was personally unpopular, but because there was nobody there concerned to cheer him—neither the Conservatives nor Labour nor indeed the "Wee Frees," only his own band of fifty, who never attended in large numbers and also were disgruntled.

In the 1923 Parliament we had experienced a Government of "Under-Secretaries and second-class brains" (*vide* Lord Birkenhead). In this the 1924 Parliament we were to experience something very much inferior but with very much more excuse. Contingent reputations of Ministers vanished daily. Mr. J. R. Clynes very nearly, if the report of a private party meeting be true, became leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party in 1923, which would have well-nigh ensured the Premiership in 1924. He was just defeated, the votes of the Clydeside extremists and the men who hated the want of courage of the man they elected being the deciding factor.

It was a great escape for the Labour Party, for Mr. Clynes by common consent was a total failure as deputy leader of the House. I heard him change the policy of His Majesty's Government three times in fourteen minutes. This was under the lash of the whip of his follower, Mr. David Kirkwood, when the latter made a memorable speech on a Friday afternoon in regard to the Glasgow evictions. His was a misplaced earnestness and sincerity, no doubt, but he won the House. I have heard two speeches which moved the House—this, and the other was Mr. Scrymgeour's on Prohibition. Even the Tories cheered, and I was left in no doubt as to how he won and held Dundee. Mr. Newbold, however, left me in considerable doubt as to how he won Motherwell as a Communist.

The reputation of Mr. Clynes was not the only one to suffer under the test of administration. In rapid succession Messrs. Henderson, Ponsonby, Leach, Ammon, and even Frank Hodges, Sidney Webb, Shaw, and Hartshorn showed that they were greater in the destructive work of opposition or upon the platform than in handling the affairs of the State. Perhaps the greatest failure of all as a Parliamentarian was Sir Patrick Hastings; partly

perhaps because so much was expected of him. Not for the first time a man abnormally brilliant in other walks of life has failed utterly and absolutely to thrive in the atmosphere of the House of Commons. There is that indescribable something which makes a man at the Bar sought after by litigants. Perhaps he has a lisp in his speech or a bad manner, and yet he outdistances his more able competitors. So at Westminster there is a something which enables some men to get the good-will and the attention of the House, while others, raising perhaps the same questions, create an atmosphere of hostility or indifference. I do not know whether it is sad or pleasing that the boy Trade Unionist from the Glasgow slums, Mr. George Buchanan, holds the House by his patent sincerity, while the distinguished scholar who follows clears the House save for those waiting in the expectation of speaking, who wish he would sit down to diminish the odds against their chance of "getting in." Ah, the great gift of scholarship, but the greater gift of being able to influence others with the little you know!

Some Labour men lost their prospective reputations as statesmen and parliamentarians in this first acid test of construction in place of

destruction, but in recording these failures I should like to put the full share of responsibility on the permanent officials—notably in the case of Mr. Vernon Hartshorn, who, attending at the House, asked for the grant of money in connection with a Post Office underground railway, from the Post Office to Euston, I believe, and was unable to tell the House whether the railway was an accomplished fact or only a project. These excellent officials rise superior to party. They are the servants of all parties, but the masters must keep within the bounds set by the servants. I have often wondered whether the Cabinet or the permanent officials are the greater—I think the latter.

And now of the successes—those men who, lacking all experience, rise marvellously to the occasion. Among these I put Mr. J. H. Thomas, Mr. Philip Snowden, and that gifted Financial Secretary, Mr. W. Graham. Mr. Philip Snowden has mellowed with age, and the biting bitterness of which he is capable, and which if much indulged in in the House of Commons would be fatal, is now only seen at rare and fleeting intervals, and then perhaps under stress of physical pain.

I think that it was left to Mr. W. Graham with a combination of accomplishments to be the outstanding success of the Labour Party. It is a pity too, for he happens to be a Liberal in all his thoughts. He is able, genial and charming, and with a memory which enables him to marshal figures without notes as a young Gladstone might do. He is young and should easily live to be Prime Minister in a Democratic Government.

The relations between the Labour Party and the Liberals in this Parliament were not happy. This was natural, for although the Liberals were according general support, there was the feeling in the Labour breast that he who can give can take away. A servant may be grateful for the gift of a post, but not if he desires and is determined to be master. Labour is fully conscious that it can only live if Liberals die. Labour thrives on Conservatives and their indiscretions, and starves on Liberals and their concessions.

To these insuperable difficulties to smooth working must be added the fact that the Labour Whips were new to the job and not particularly efficient. Time after time the daily difficulties of Parliamentary life which should be smoothed

away by the tact and give-and-take of genial opposing Whips, now mishandled, became running sores. It requires much tact to oppose but much more to co-operate.

The Liberals on the whole in this Parliament had a bad time, culminating in the disaster of the General Election that followed, and individual Members fared scarcely better. Qualified support gives fewer opportunities to individuals than unqualified opposition, and in such opposition as there was the Liberals found competitors in a large number of Conservatives, for at least the Conservatives cut a better figure in Opposition than they had ever done in office.

The Liberals had an even greater difficulty, for they were united in theory but not in fact, or rather I should say that the disunity of the past had been replaced by a new disunity. There were those who as " Wee Frees " had at all times faced and conquered general opposition. There were those who as National Liberals had seen the light of day in a Conservative environment. Worse still there were those who had triumphed over Labour at the last election with the aid of Tory votes and those who aided by Labour had crushed the Tory. It was not to be expected

that people with such varying origins could sincerely share the same outlook. They did not share it. I was friendly with all these units and groups as I had been with both "Wee Frees" and National Liberals in the previous Parliament, but I could not be blind to the difficulties which existed. The result was on many occasions stampede and confusion on the call of a division. It would ill become me to complain as a Whip that individuals did not respond to the call, for I admire independence, but those who declined to treat themselves as a party in the House of Commons could scarcely expect the electors so to treat them in the country. At the ensuing election the country refused so to treat them.

The Labour Party, faced with the abnormal difficulty of being in office but deprived of power, on the whole did remarkably well. It must not be forgotten that it assumed office without experience of responsibility, and in the very nature of things drew its Ministers from a smaller number of members than any previous Government had ever had to select from. Substantial credit must be accorded to the Labour Party on its first assumption of office, and nothing is more creditable to it than that it remained united

to the end. For the maintenance of unity was and is likely to be the party's greatest problem. Even in this, their short spell of office, cracks could be detected. The Glasgow group, Messrs. Maxton, Buchanan, and Kirkwood, kept an eye upon their representative in the Cabinet, Mr. Wheatley. From time to time the threatening finger of Mr. Maxton would point to the front bench in anger. Mr. Buchanan would stir the House by his sincere appeals to the leaders who had failed him, while Mr. Kirkwood would outpour his hatred and contempt upon them, for he distrusted them worse than his open foes. This group spoke for a larger group in the House and a crowd outside. They have nothing in common with Mr. Henderson in levee coat and plush breeches. They ask for the "stern realities" as they know them in their native slums.

Chapter XIII

A PARTY WHIP

Immediately after my second return for Oxford in 1923 I was offered the position of a Junior Whip for the Liberal Party, which had reached substantial proportions in this Parliament. I did not accept the position with alacrity, still less did I seek or desire it, but it was impossible to refuse any offer from Mr. Asquith. It was so nice to feel that he thought you were fit for the job. Another compensation was the opportunity of working under Mr. Vivian Phillips, the appointed Chief Whip. Mr. Vivian Phillips was very nearly a great Chief Whip. He only lacked the quality of "genial insincerity." By that I mean the art of talking on familiar and intimate terms with a person who stops you and wants something, a person whose name you do not know, whom you do not remember ever having seen before, and about

whom you have a passing doubt whether he belongs to your party or another party, or is, in fact, an official of the House out of his uniform, or a Press representative. This man has to be hailed as a friend and promised everything he wants, but with a general reservation which precludes the necessity of either fulfilling the promise or remembering what you have promised.

Other qualities are required of Whips, particularly the Chief Whip, and all of these Mr. Vivian Phillips possessed in a high and marked degree.

I look upon Party Whips, particularly Junior Whips, as standing in the same relationship to a party as lance-corporals do to a regiment. They are the cat's-paws and the scapegoats of all above and below, and the position is one that it is important should be filled at all times with equanimity and good grace, and if it is well filled, either in Parliament or in the army, that is an assurance that you will never be promoted. The best thing for a lance-corporal seeking promotion in the army is to drop his rifle on parade; in Parliament the Junior Whip should deliver a message as he receives it. A great and important part of the duty of a Junior Whip is to turn

English phrases so that they are as palatable to those who receive them as to those who sent them. Here are some examples. Your Chief: "Gray, go and tell that —— fool not to get up and raise that point of his. He will stop the division, which is just what the Tories want." Then you, translating to the Honourable Member "I say, old boy, Vivian thinks that you will get a much better show with your point, which is a really good one and may be of great value to the party if properly raised, if you say nothing about it to-night but give notice and raise it on the Estimates. Shall I draft a notice and put it in for you?" Your follower: "I say, Frank, is there any chance for me to speak in to-morrow's debate or are the —— leaders going to talk all the time? They have spoken every day this week and —— badly too, and the back benchers don't get a chance to speak at all." This feeling you put to one of your leaders as follows: "Sir, a crowd of our fellows would speak on this if pressed. They all want you to speak, but it really is not necessary for you to be worried every day. Shall I get —— to speak? he knows all about it."

"To catch the Speaker's eye," that is, to get

the opportunity to speak, is one of the difficulties of the young parliamentarian and one of the problems of the Whips. One may lay it down as a general rule: "Wait and be always ready and the opportunity will come," but to speak on a particular occasion and upon a particular subject is not so easy. It is not a matter of chance as so many suppose, apart from the unwritten law giving priority to front benchers. It is far from chance. The Speaker is usually guided in selecting a speaker from the crowd who stand up, first by the consideration of what party's turn it is to supply the next speaker, and he has a list supplied to him by a Whip of that party. So it comes about that it is a matter of concern with the would-be speaker to get on the Whip's list and in a good position—although, even so, unforeseen circumstances, such as long speeches, or the undue intervention of front benchers, often bring the best-laid calculations to naught. Many are the ways in which would-be speakers try to influence the Whip to put their names high up on his list, and wherever it is on his list, to press him to get the Speaker "to call him next time." Mr. Justice Horridge, after beating Mr. A. J. (now Lord) Balfour at

Manchester, went to the then bright but harassed Junior Liberal Whip, and to emphasise his claims to speak said, " I am the man, you know, who beat Balfour." " That," replied the Whip, " is an excellent reason why you should reach this House under a triumphal arch, but none why you should interfere in this debate when you get here."

Many a man has had his spirit broken and his career in the House cut short by his failure to catch the Speaker's eye. Walking home late one night with a gifted friend, I said, " I think I saw you trying to get in to-night. Were you lucky ? " " No," he replied, " I spent three days preparing a speech and I sat in the House from four till eleven without getting in and without any food. I shall never speak again." He never has. I tried to comfort him with my experience and I said, " Well, I tried two days running—got up every time a speaker sat down and was never called, and I am going to have another two days' try directly." But there was this great difference between my friend and me. He carefully prepared his speeches and I did not. I did not intend or expect to make a big speech. I was content to speak on speeches

which had preceded, and in that way at least you miss the awful ordeal of having the whole of your speech anticipated bit by bit by the dozen speakers who get in before you. But you still get the experience of having risen ten times without result till your action becomes automatic, and on the eleventh occasion the Speaker says, "Mr. Frank Gray"—he does not refer to you by constituency—and in your surprise and your overwrought state after prolonged, anxious anticipation you have quite forgotten what you proposed to say if called upon.

Some men, however, get in on all occasions when they desire to do so. They do not need the help of the Whip or anybody else's. I used to reflect that perhaps they succeeded because the Speaker found it easiest to follow the line of least resistance and let them have their way at once Commander Kenworthy, Mr. David Kirkwood, Sir Kingsley Wood and Captain Berkeley, each of these, if all other means failed, would found a speech on raising a point of order. Here procedure enables immediate intervention. Commander Kenworthy is a great personality, able, industrious, a fighter, courageous and has a "hide" no shaft, Parliamentary or otherwise,

can pierce. The recklessness of his courage and his indiscretions alone deprive him of the right to call himself a born Radical leader. He is the type of leader who would win a brilliant cavalry action, forget the troops' rations, the protection of his flanks, fail to post his sentries on duty and be unmindful of the position of the main army. He would when he intended to speak start his first two sentences in the very act of rising ; it was easier to let him go on than to stop him. He and Captain Berkeley shared the honours of being quite indifferent to whether the opportunity to speak was suitable or not and whether anybody at all desired to hear them. Indeed Commander Kenworthy gave me the impression that it was only possible for him to speak in a hostile House. I have noticed him falter and fail at the outset of a speech till assured that the House was hostile. Then his chest broadened and he became confident and happy. He, like the late Lord Salisbury, liked to be cheered but liked to be hooted more.

Arranging for speakers in debate is not the only duty of a Whip. He is, as a matter of fact, "the maid-of-all-work" of his parliamentary party. Any work that cannot be defi-

nitely fixed upon any other functionary must be given to him, and all faults and defaults must of necessity be laid at his door. It is he who carries messages and makes arrangements between the parties for the smooth running of the business of the House, and in the doing of it tones down the harsh orders of his Chief Whip to a honeyed and almost servile request to the Chief on the other side. It is he who tells you, when you ask permission to leave the House, that it is not safe to go because there may be a division. It is also he who is reprimanded by the same Member for not saying there was going to be a division which, to the discredit of the Member in his constituency, has taken place in his absence.

The House is a place of great uncertainty, a factor of great moment to the Whip. Full-dress debates—important debates in which the leaders of all parties take part—have a habit of breaking down, or in parliamentary language "fizzling out." The debate expected to last seven hours shows signs of collapsing through some unexpected announcement of a Minister at the end of three hours, and the luckless Whip has told the followers that they will be all right if back in five hours, having allowed himself a margin

of two hours for safety. In these circumstances the debate just has to be kept going. But how? If you have friends like Messrs. Pringle, Kenworthy, Berkeley or Kingsley Wood, or resourceful and gifted politicians like Mr. Masterman and Mr. Lief Jones, always able and ready to help a Whip, and all men who can speak on anything at any time if the exigencies of the moment require it, you are saved. If not, you must get up and speak yourself, and if you say something perhaps quite irrelevant but very nasty about the other two parties, Conservative and Labour, and make them angry, they are sure to get up to reply and you have saved the situation.

The art of speaking upon something you know nothing about at short notice is great, for not only can you delay divisions but you can delay business. Divisions take place unexpectedly, and so do debates, and so also do "scenes" in the House. It is calm, peaceful and boring one moment and the next there is almost a fight on the floor.

I was present at the memorable row between the Rt. Hon. L. Amery and Mr. George Buchanan. It was after eleven. We were all tired and wanted to go home, but somebody had availed

himself of the statutory right to raise a matter on the motion for adjournment at eleven o'clock to discuss a matter for half-an-hour without the right of claiming a division. The House was thinning. Mr. Amery in speaking said something offensive to Labour—it was probably true. Somebody shouted the retort "Gutter-snipe," and then unluckily the Deputy Speaker left the Chair at, or perhaps (to get out of a row) a little before 11.30; a means of closing a debate at the time at which the House adjourns unless the rule is suspended. Mr. Buchanan rushed down the gangway across to Mr. Amery; a blow by one or other was struck and confusion reigned.

The next day there were mutual apologies at the commencement of the sitting. First Mr. Amery and then Mr. Buchanan apologized to the House, and then to the surprise of everybody Mr. George Lansbury, the dearest, the most honest and the most misguided man in the House, who had no connection with the affair, got up and gratuitously apologized for nothing, which led to my amusing and good friend Mr. Isaac Foot, who was sitting behind me, saying, in a stage whisper, "Why don't you get up, Gray, and mention that petition and the one or

two things you have done and which you would like to apologize for, and you will be white-washed!"

All these uncertainties drive home the necessity of Members who wish to hear, see, learn and participate being ever at hand. It is a necessity enforced upon a Whip, for one of each party must always be in the House awaiting the unexpected. It is a weary business, but it brings you very close to the work of the House, and perhaps the greatest compensation a Parliamentary Whip gets is to be really associated actively in the work of the House. How some Members—and they are many—go there day after day content to sit in the House or in the smoke-room without either participating, or appearing to desire to participate personally, is a little difficult to understand.

Being a Whip carries with it the right to take part in little ceremonials rather more appealing than ordinary social affairs. These are the Speaker's dinners to the leaders of the different parties in turn, preceding the Speaker's reception, an affair of Court dress and gay uniforms, to which you must go—or be reported to the Whips—as a mark of respect to the House;

and then there is the Party dinner on the eve of Parliament, when an advance copy of the King's Speech is handed by the Chief Whip to the leader, and read by him to the front benchers of the party, for which purpose the waiters are solemnly ordered from the room and the doors closed. On the only occasion on which I had the privilege to attend this function Mr. Lloyd George was acting leader in the absence of Mr. Asquith. Mr. Lloyd George read the speech aloud. It was the speech after the 1923 election, prepared by the Conservative party after the leaders knew that they were in a minority and were not going to be kept in office. It set forth a list of domestic reforms with which the Conservative party had in vain had the opportunity of dealing in the last Parliament, and which they knew they would not be given the opportunity of dealing with in this Parliament. This operation is called window dressing. Mr. Lloyd George at the conclusion of the reading winked at the assembly and uttered one sentence which the whole world would like to have heard from him, and then added, "Let's have dinner, gentlemen."

Chapter XIV

A PETITION

The Oxford election of 1923 was bitter. It suffered from the importation of commercial bitterness, but it requires more than even this upon which to found an election petition. Petitions are always rare, a fact which arises, one may hope, through care in the conduct of elections, and strict compliance with the legal rules and regulations, rather than from the fact that petitions are not popular and in the long run do not pay. Those petitioned against may be popular; petitioners never are. Police may discharge a difficult duty and enjoy the good-will and respect of the public; the common informer has only the consciousness of his own righteousness for reward.

To ensure the lodging of a petition there must always be a combination of circumstances. There must be personal bitterness—the inarticulate bitterness of the crowd is useless. It must

be a personal bitterness associated with the possession and control of money to be risked or expended. It is difficult to transfer bitterness from the man who has no money to him who has, and still more difficult to transfer bitterness to those in control of party funds. They are usually very sympathetic and agree entirely with the would-be petitioner in his view of the wickedness of the man who has beaten him, but decide to apply the funds at their disposal to winning seats elsewhere.

I had quite gratuitously and single-handed provided the necessary combination of elements to ensure the lodging of a petition against me.

I was angry after the 1923 election on account of unsportsmanlike bitterness and annoyances—not altogether atoned for by victory—and particularly on account of the street insults to my wife and lady workers by the Conservative hooligans—and I made a speech which was reported. I would not have made it had I not known it would be reported. Ah, the dangerous gift of speech, for by its means we bring sorrow to ourselves and worse still to others. It is nearly as dangerous as letter-writing and more expensive than horse-racing.

This unfortunate speech, however ill chosen, might have been all right if my election accounts, wrong on the face of them, had not been worse under investigation.

We had filed our accounts showing an over expenditure, and so an immediate application to the Court for relief became necessary, but before this legal machinery was well in motion I was turned cold by the information that a petition had been filed.

Whatever the facts, I imagine that every man feels unnerved by the first knowledge that he is to take a leading part in all that centres round a writ, a petition, or a warrant. The law brings such an indescribable fear, both to those accustomed and to those unaccustomed to it, that strong men lose the sense of proportion to a degree in which they would not lose it on the battle-field. Petitions seem to affect with fear those who are and those who are not concerned with them. During the stages in which we awaited the hearing, men would remember something that had taken place years before and beg that I would not disclose it. Others would come in the secrecy of the night to disclose something which if it had been true would have been dis-

creditable to the other side but immaterial. But all would beg that they should not personally be dragged in. One good body who had in truth got dragged in, but only to play a small and almost humorous part, firmly persuaded herself that she was called upon to play the leading part in a first-class drama and mystery, and desired at all stages to arrange mysterious and secret meetings with me to discuss the matter.

The material and salient facts were that my agent, a promising graduate of Oxford, brilliant in many ways, but without either the temperament or experience for an agent, was placed through my folly and pressure in a position he could not possibly fill, particularly when the normal difficulties of an election were augmented by the passions and excitement of this contest. He undoubtedly spent more than the law permitted. That he had unwittingly overspent was to my business mind conclusively proved by the fact that he paid all accounts as they came in irrespective of his ultimate total, included items for which neither he nor I were liable, and which should not have been in the total, and left the matter over till it was too late to rectify it at all, saving by getting others to make repayments and reductions

which were held to be illegal. So innocent was his method that he filed and published accounts which disclosed irregularities to the whole world. In truth his own disclosures were greater than the discoveries of the famous Lewis and Lewis firm, two detectives and three learned Counsel. Indeed after months of laborious work, vast expenditure and investigations the celebrated firm of solicitors had to have it pointed out to them that the accounts which were scrutinized for evasions had not even been added up correctly, while the detectives had not discovered all the committee rooms which were the scene of fierce activities during polling day.

My agent could not expect to escape blame—and he did not—nor I to claim to be entitled to escape the result of conduct for which I had been so largely responsible. What was far more unfortunate was that those with whom the agent had dealt should have been called upon not only to reduce and lose a substantial part of their accounts—it was endeavoured by dark hints of petitioners' Counsel, quite unsuccessfully, to suggest that they had since been paid, or that there was a promise to pay them in full—but should also be publicly blamed for conduct which

could only have been actuated by a desire to help others, including myself, at their own expense.

I was blamed by the petitioners' Counsel but not by the Judges. The darkest suggestion of implication was that I did not blame those who had got themselves into a mess in an attempt, misguided perhaps, to help my agent and ultimately myself. Worse than that, the petitioners and their Counsel and lawyers were surprised that I did not turn on my agent and these gentlemen, who at their own expense had placed themselves in a difficult position to help others; and yet I would rather share a trench in France with those whose comrades' conduct had been condemned than those who expressed surprise at it. For this comradeship of theirs is one of the things that matter.

Many times during the months that passed between the lodging of the petition and its hearing I thought of the criminal awaiting a trial. I found it particularly irksome, for I possess the power of action—immediate action for good or ill—but not the greater quality of patience. It was particularly hard to pursue one's trying and onerous duties in and out of the Commons when they had

become clothed with unreality, and particularly hard to attempt light-hearted speeches in the House and at all times, too, to pursue an attitude of undismay before foe and friend, particularly the latter.

Mr. J. B. Mathews was given a most difficult case, more difficult to him than any man perhaps—a case which required an eloquent and indeed most talkative man to say as little as possible. He did it admirably. I used, in the days when I was much in the Courts as a solicitor's clerk, to wonder what were the qualities that made a great K.C. The successful and unsuccessful all knew the law and were trained and widely experienced. There was just a little something that determined the line of division, perhaps a little personality or originality. Mr. Mathews has personality. He has that inscrutable way of saying rapidly in and out of season to the Judges, "If you please, if you please," observations innocent in themselves but frequently used to stop the unsuspecting Counsel on the other side from pursuing a dangerous line and himself from the need of developing an equally dangerous proposition. The late Lord Chief Justice Trevethan won much success at the Bar as a cross-examiner by a habit of pausing to wipe

his glasses and slowly ejaculating " Ugh " after each unimportant answer, which enabled the witness to fill up the embarrassing pause with a fatal addition to his original statement.

To me, one loving a fight, the greatest sorrow was that, knowing long before the trial that I had no case, I was denied by the procedure, which was that of a Court of Enquiry, the right of admitting the fact and begging the Judges to let me pay the costs and say no more about it. The ponderous machine of justice had to proceed upon its expensive operation, while I was left to hope that in face of the impossibility of winning I might get through with some degree of comfort and satisfaction.

Even in these dark days there were gleams of humour which I at my worst never failed to notice. Meeting an important witness I said, " This is a bad business." " Yes," said he, " the facts are bad, which, of course, we shall have to admit, but not in too naked a form." I left him wondering what precise extent of perjury he had it in mind to commit or avoid in what he deemed to be my interests. Indeed throughout I was encouraged in my belief in human nature. Poor and starving men who were not even on " the

dole," and had been employed by me to deliver bills, threw down and left both their subpœnas and ten shillings conduct money. Greater love than this has no hungry man. Loyalty indeed was the order of the day.

The day of trial arrived, and the first to get into trouble was the Mayor, who, while accompanying the Judges to the County Hall, was severely reprimanded because the local policeman stopped the Judge's motor-car rather than permit manslaughter in his very sight. Judges are human. There was a fanfare of trumpets outside the historic County Hall and the Judges entered. Mr. Justice Sankey and Mr. Justice Rigby Swift bowed to each other and the learned Counsel, and they to the Judges, and the hearing commenced.

I could not be expected to have the curiosity of a Pickwick about the Court, for in my days as a solicitor I had got thoroughly acclimatized to Courts, and to the Assize Court in particular. I therefore turned my attention to the Judges—two widely different personalities. Mr. Justice Rigby Swift is just the eminent lawyer, great in handling witnesses but with no intimate knowledge of humanity. Mr. Justice Sankey is handsome

and genial, eminent as a Judge, but essentially human, and also a man of the world. The last-named qualities are not picked up in the routine of either Bench or Bar, though Judges and barristers think they are masters of both. Mr. Justice Sankey must have acquired them in other fields.

In Courts of Law men and women are at their best or at their worst, but they are never their normal selves. The good witnesses—and the despairing lawyer never knows whether they are good or bad till he gets them in the box—may greatly exaggerate his purity, while the bad witness may leave the box having grossly magnified his dishonesty. The clever cross-examiner may extract the truth ; he may also extract what is not true, and this quite unwittingly, from the witness. Witnesses are play-actors endeavouring to be at their best with varying results. It is in the home, surgery and office where the doctor and solicitor have the curtain of humanity drawn aside and get the real truth.

Mr. Whiteley, K.C., opened the case by detailing items of excessive expenditure against us. Some of these had to be dropped, but not nearly so many as we had to add on our own confession,

for we had decided that full and frank disclosure there must be.

Before the final stages of the trial, and before my final ordeal of going into the witness box, I had ample time to view the Court beyond the immediate arena of Judges and Counsel. Apart from the general gallery, throughout filled by those who will stand early and fight in a queue for admission, there were select galleries to which access was given by ticket from the Mayor. Each side had an allotment of these tickets, which were eagerly sought after. I watched particularly the area allocated to my opponents. There sat most of my enemies, among them the bitter women who rush to trials to see the anguish of others.

I entered the box before them, to admit, as I told the Judges, the main facts of the case against me, but to fight for my honour. The Judges afterwards told me in generous terms that I had vindicated my honour. My ordeal proved far easier than I had anticipated. Mr. Whiteley cross-examined me, and I soon found that he thought better but very much more slowly than I did. I also found he was nervous and shy of the Judges.

And now it was over, and the Judges in sufficiently stern and carefully considered language delivered their judgments, and an election for the city of Oxford was for the fourth time in the political history of the city declared null and void.

Chapter XV

REFLECTIONS

Defeat, whether at the polls or on petition, gives time for reflection, time to count the gains and above all the losses. It is the time when interviews cease and correspondence ends, except from the applicants for subscriptions, and the supply of newspaper cuttings diminishes.

At all periods before and since the Reform Act there have been these opportunities for thought and reflection by defeated candidates, but they are more frequent now, for we have fully armed democracy before we have learnt how to lead or control it, and before we have taught it how to direct itself to its own best advantage. The majority of six thousand to-day is the minority of four thousand to-morrow. Few men can claim that their seats are safe. There is no " close season " for Ministers or Prime Ministers. Democracy acclaims its hero to-day, defeats him to-morrow.

Democracy always did when it took power into its own hands—a contingency not contemplated by the Legislature and therefore not provided for—and democracy does it to-day when it holds the reins.

As democracy has no continuity of outlook there must be less continuity of legislation. At the dictate of democracy Mr. Neville Chamberlain embarks upon a Housing Scheme through private enterprise. It is reversed within a year by Mr. Wheatley, also at the dictates of democracy. Democracy may find that its leaders repudiate it as readily as it repudiates them. They may seek to exercise power through other channels, or democracy may have to seek other leaders and representatives, not necessarily worse or better than those of to-day but different.

The learned professions require that those claiming to practise them shall study them, shall pass through a prolonged period of pupilage and thereafter give evidence of having attained a certain standard of knowledge, but no such test is applied to those seeking to practise the highest profession of all—that of law-making.

I hold the view, which I have expressed in earlier chapters, that, with a few exceptions, by

careful nursing of a constituency a legislator can still obtain some security of tenure of his seat. But those ready and able to make the sacrifices demanded to attain this end must remain few. That men, and women too, will always be found to contest seats for the Mother of Parliaments I do not doubt, but whether, with no assured continuity of the requirement of their services, they will be ready to prepare and train themselves for the discharge of the duties they undertake is more doubtful, at least in the case of those who are able to find other attractive spheres for their activities. Would Mr. Reginald McKenna, for instance, find it more alluring to be Chancellor of the Exchequer to-day and to have no seat to-morrow than to hold the highest place in a great and influential financial corporation? The matter is of vast importance, for the good government of the country depends on our getting the ablest and best men for the work, and we shall not get them unless the work of legislation offers rewards at least as attractive as those which can be won in other types of service. If we do not get them, we shall be more and more dependent on our permanent officials. I do not doubt that the latter would be the more efficient, but they do not represent the people.

The work of the legislator is arduous and exhausting, almost demoralizing. It requires and demands rewards and compensation, and indeed it offers both. Those whom you associate with in the House of Commons offer compensation, for they are interesting. You go to a powerful company, you interview representative after representative, and are left wondering how the company could have succeeded so greatly in the hands of such representatives, and yet you know if you can only find him that somewhere in this great company is the master-mind that has brought this power and success. In the House of Commons one of the commonest observations of your neighbour during a debate is, "Good gracious, how did this fellow ever get here?" A closer and more intimate knowledge of "this fellow" discloses that there is something about him which accounts for his being one of the elected, always excepting that percentage of every majority party in the House who, without personal merit, have come into the Legislature on the crest of a political wave. Some, doubtless, are attracted to the House of Commons by the hope of office, titles, honours, some merely by the love of "being in the public eye," but there are always to be found the

men who believe that in entering public life they are serving their country and humanity, and who in order to do that submit gladly to the difficulties and sacrifices which the work demands.