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last week by placing a chain on the metals; fortunately the attempt failed, or the train must have gone over an embankment fifty feet high.—Mr. Ramsay, M.P., has been trying to persuade the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce to endeavour to trace the cause of railway disasters, and to consider whether the whole management had not better be transferred to Government; but as he found no supporter the Chamber has decided to take no action.



PARLIAMENT has during the past week presented a singular spectacle. In the House of Lords five curiously-clad figures have been pretty regularly sitting upon the woollack, and have been the principals in the accomplishment of such business as has been transacted. Not that they have spoken much, for four out of the five have been absolutely dumb. But their garments have been sufficient to invest them with an air of importance which more than compensated for lack of speech. Every time Parliament is opened by Commission the "get-up" of the noble lords selected to represent Her Majesty is made the subject of marvelling comment. But on ordinary occasions the Lords Commissioners present themselves only once for a brief half hour to the public gaze, and thenceforward disappear. At the opening of the first session of a new Parliament, however, the Lords Commissioners appear not less than three times; and the state of breathless amazement into which the beholder is cast the first time—a mental condition which prevents him from minutely scanning the five figures—is partially overcome on the second occasion, and at the recurrence of the third he is able calmly to make note of the details of the dresses, and carry away a clear impression of the general effect. The natural consequence is that there is at the opening of a new Parliament considerably more laughter at the red gowns slashed with bars of ermine, and the cocked hats of the Lords Commissioners, than at any other epoch.

But the whole formula of the opening of a new Parliament savours so strongly of olden times and elder manners that, after all, the masquerade on the Woollack is scarcely out of place. At this juncture, at least, the House of Commons is reminded that there was a time when the question was not the speculative one whether the Lower House should "abolish the House of Lords," but the practical one whether it was worth the while of the King and the Barons to be troubled with the formal collegiality of the members of the House of Commons. It was decided that on the whole it were better to let the Commons in; but the favour was conceded in an exceedingly high and mighty manner, no opportunity being lost of impressing upon the Commons that, though by the grace of the Sovereign they were admitted to a nominal share in the government of the country, yet it behoved them to bear in mind the relative lowness of their position in the presence of the King. This fiction—once a very sober fact—lives in the dialogues which take place between the representatives of the House of Commons and the representatives of the Sovereign at the time of the opening of a new Parliament. The quaintly "high falutin'" language employed in the initiatory processes of Freemasonry scarcely excels in character the conversations that have taken place since Thursday week between the Commons and the Lords Commissioners. On Monday Lord Cairns, who as Lord Chancellor sits in the centre of the row of figures on the woollack, conducted himself with due gravity when the Speaker, summoned by Black Rod, entered and stood at the bar, and said what he had to say with proper accent. But he laughed visibly when on the Speaker's retirement the four figures on either hand bent forward like mourning marionettes in returning the salute of the Speaker.

In the House of Commons the proceedings have been equally interesting to students of Parliamentary traditions. As soon as the Speaker had retired from the House of Lords, happy in the "Royal approval" of his election, and assured of the continuance of Royal observance of the rights and liberties of the House over which he presided, he took the oath, signed the roll of Parliament, and doffing the "bob wig" he had hitherto modestly worn, bloomed forth in the glories of the Speaker's attire. Then the process of swearing-in hon. members was commenced. Two long tables were brought in from one of the side rooms, and were set down on the floor in continuation of the Clerk's table. A collection of Bibles, bound in morocco, was strewed at intervals down the tables, and here and there were interspersed small hand boards with a printed copy of the oath pasted thereon. Sir Erskine May, the Clerk, read out a list of names, and the hon. members thus indicated flocking round the tables took up the Bibles in groups of three or four, and the Clerk reciting aloud the brief oath, all repeated it after him, kissing the book as they finished. On the first day nearly half of the members on the roll attended to be sworn in, and the procedure occasionally assumed the complexion of a scuffle. After the swearing-in had been going on for some time it was discovered that hon. members whose names had not been called were pressing up to sign the roll, after swearing themselves in, or getting a friend to hear them take the oath. This device, seen clearly enough from the galleries, had flourished like a green bay tree before it was discovered through the innocent instrumentality of Mr. Melly. The hon. member for Stoke enjoys in the House a personality distinct enough to prevent his movements from passing without observation, and when by a strategic movement round the back of the Ministerial benches he succeeded in getting in front of the *quais*, and prefixing his signature, Sir Erskine May knew well enough that he had not been summoned in the first batch, and so he was sent back. After Mr. Melly's repulse the list was checked off, and the swearing-in proceeded in order. Mr. Newdegate had, probably owing to machinations on the part of a distinguished Personage who shall here be nameless, somehow or other been prevented from taking the oath in due form when it was administered in the wholesale manner described. For a long time the hon. member was observed slowly making his way up the *quais* with a Bible held firmly in his hand. When he reached the Clerk his intention was explained by his requesting that the oath might be specially administered to him, and this was done. But his misadventures were not yet at an end. Members sign the roll, and write after their name on the same line the name of the county or borough for which they sit. Mr. Newdegate has been thirty years in Parliament, and has signed a good many rolls; but on this occasion he committed the curious error of writing "North Warwickshire" under the list of the names of members, and his

own name in the column of boroughs and counties. The error had to be rectified by the simple expedient of running the pen through the line, and so it came to pass that Mr. Newdegate signed the roll twice.

Mr. Gladstone waited till Monday to be sworn in, and then had the undivided attention of Sir Erskine May. The attendance had by this time dwindled down to a number that barely allowed of the "forming of a House," and on Thursday, when it met again for the last time previous to the brief recess for the re-election of Ministers, the same difficulty temporarily debarred Mr. Hart Dyke from moving for the issue of a writ for the election in Buckinghamshire, "to fill the vacancy consequent on the acceptance by the Right Hon. Benjamin Disraeli of the office of First Lord of the Treasury."



THE TURF.—Croydon has monopolised the steeplechasing of the week, but after the first day's sport on Tuesday the meeting had to be postponed in consequence of the frost. The return of winter, after March had "come in like a lamb," has created dismay in many training stables, and will if it continues sadly interfere with the preparation of many candidates for Spring honours, and especially of many of the probable competitors for the Lincoln Handicap. On Tuesday, Newmarket Heath was covered with snow, and trainers who were anxious to do some little work with their horses had to exercise them on the tan gallop.

The death of Count Renard at Berlin will be felt in racing circles. In 1870 he won the Cambridgeshire with Adonis, and owned Hochstapler, the favourite for last year's Derby, who cut up so badly in the race. This horse, which had been one of the favourites for the Lincolnshire Handicap, becomes disqualified for the race by his owner's death.

AQUATICS.—The appearance of the Cambridge crew on the London water on Monday last was the signal for the commencement of that excitement annually manifested by the good people of the metropolis in reference to the Inter-University boat race. Unfortunately for Oxford, in consequence of the different arrangement of the University term, the Dark Blues will not be able to arrive at Putney before the 18th, thus giving their rivals the great advantage of having more than a week's practice between Putney and Mortlake while they are still doing their work on their not very suitable courses at Oxford. Matters have not gone at all smoothly with the Oxford crew. There has been from the first a great difficulty in the choice of men and settling them in their places, and now at a most critical period Mr. Nicholson, the Oxford President, has been obliged to leave the boat altogether in consequence of the unfortunate death of his mother. In the way of Cambridge on the other hand no special difficulties have arisen, the crew was soon formed, and regular practice has sent an eight to Putney which in the opinion of good judges is not capable of much material improvement. Matters certainly look gloomy for the dark blues, and the fact that any amount of money at two to one or even more is offered against them shows that public opinion has already given a positive opinion as to their chances of victory. As we have more than once observed in reference to former races public opinion is right five times out of six as to the probable result of a boat race; still, we think it rather premature to pronounce such a positive verdict before the Oxford crew has shown itself on the London waters. When they make their appearance interest in the race will quicken, and the river and towing path between Putney and Mortlake will be the chief centre of attraction for many hundreds who look on the preliminary practice and the preliminary spins with friendly eyes with almost as much enjoyment as the race itself. Unfortunately a very regrettable episode in reference to the proposed banquet to the crews at the Mansion House will have to be added to the history of this year's contest. The present Lord Mayor following the example of his predecessor sent invitations to the crews to dine with him on the Saturday evening after the race. Partly owing to a desire to ascertain the views of the Cambridge crew in the matter, and the general feeling of his own University, and partly owing to his own absence for some days from Oxford, no answer was sent to his Lordship by Mr. Darbishire for more than a week after the invitation. Cambridge had accepted it, but Oxford made no sign, till the Lord Mayor felt it necessary to telegraph to the Oxford President, who then sent a telegraphic reply declining the invitation. His Lordship thereupon seems to have got very angry, and like many angry persons at once did a very foolish thing in writing and publishing a letter in which he shows his deep resentment at the delay in answering his invitation and the refusal of his hospitality, while he gives the Oxford President a very sharp but most undignified rap over the knuckles for his rudeness. Several anonymous letters of explanation have appeared in the pages of some of our daily contemporaries, and especially that of Mr. Darbishire, the Oxford "coach," in the *Times* of Wednesday. On this subject we have commented elsewhere.

FOOTBALL.—On Saturday last, at Partick, near Glasgow, the third International match, according to the Association rules, was won by Scotland, the Northerners scoring two goals to England's one.

A REASON FOR WINTER'S RETURN

March 12, 1874

So loth to let her go, e'en to a land
Where welcome voices drowned the cannon's roar,
To yield her even to a husband's hand
Without a look upon her face once more;
E'en Winter's self, that mighty Northern King,
Whose presence watched her childhood's earliest hours,
(Like flower protected 'neath his snowy wing),
Looosed Nature's chains, to strew her path with flowers;
Called gentle Spring to bear her safely o'er
The sunlit sea, beneath the azure sky,
Then followed in his stern old power once more,
To bid her one last lingering good-bye!

B. H.



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BELFORT intends to commemorate her heroic defence against the Prussians in 1870 by a monument. This will be executed by an Alsatian sculptor, and will represent a colossal lion erect on the rock at the foot of the citadel.

CREMATION is rapidly finding disciples on the Continent. Zurich has been holding a meeting of a "Cremation" Society, while the Communal Council of Vienna has consented to the establishment of the necessary apparatus for this purpose in the cemetery. The use of this is optional and open to all.

THE COMING LONDON INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION will contain a splendid collection of ancient lace, lent by M. Dupont, of Paris, arrayed in chronological order, so as to illustrate the progress of lace making, and including some pieces of historical interest, such as lace which formerly belonged to Louis XV., Marie Antoinette, and Napoleon I.

A TRANSATLANTIC GUY FAWKES recently walked into the Senate Chamber of Louisiana with a keg of gunpowder in his arms, set it down, and coolly proceeded to strike a match in order to explode it, but was seized before he could carry out his object. The would-be Samson had become crazed at some fancied wrongs at the hands of Governor Kellogg, and had determined on exterminating the entire Government.

"A CURIOUS HISTORICAL DOCUMENT," says the *Swiss Times*, "has just been discovered in Italy:—The undersigned declares that he has received 25 livres from M. Abraham Levi, for which he pledges a sword of the same value, 6 Shirts, 4 Sheets, and 2 Towels. March 2nd, 1570. (Signed) TORQUATO TASSO." The author of "Jerusalem Delivered" was twenty-six years of age when he received this kindness from his Hebrew friend.

THE PARISIANS, seizing the opportunity of the present political calm, are turning their attention to the Fine Arts. As soon as the new Opera is finished the Director of Fine Arts proposes to complete the artistic decorations of the Pantheon with paintings and sculptures by well-known French artists as an example of French art of the present day. *Après* of the new Opera, it is estimated that the whole cost of the works will amount to a total of 2,850,000*l.*, including 420,000*l.* the price of the ground, and a sum of 100,000*l.* for new scenery and properties.

LONDON MORTALITY declined again last week, the deaths numbering 1,578, against 1,754 in the previous return, and being 107 below the average. The fatal cases of diseases of the respiratory organs, although 27 above the usual register, fell from 667 to 609—289 of these being from bronchitis, those of measles decreased to 62 from 75, and those of whooping cough from 69 to 56. The deaths from scarlet fever, however, rose to 25, an increase of 12, while those from fever diminished from 34 to 19. The mean temperature was 41.6 deg., 1.5 deg. above the average.

THE LATE ALEXANDRE DUMAS is now asserted to have left three unpublished dramatic works, in addition to the drama of *La Jeunesse de Louis XIV.*, produced this week at the Odéon. One is a *Romeo and Juliet*, in verse, quite complete and which was to have been produced at the Odéon in 1869, but was shelved on account of a difficulty in finding a suitable Juliet. The two others consist of part of a drama, *The Death of Porthos*, a piece written at the actor Dumaine's request, and three scenes of *Joseph Balsano*. Dumas is said to have felt dissatisfied with all three of these works.

ROMAN EXCAVATIONS of late have been somewhat fruitful. On the Esquiline a perfect statue of Juno, two others representing Camillus and Esculapius, six statues of Venus, most of them headless, and about forty pieces of a colossal female statue, not yet named by the antiquarians, have been unearthed. Near the gate of San Lorenzo, half a mile from the railway terminus, the remains of a Forum, surrounded by arcades, has also been discovered. The necessary foundation for what is now commonly called "Roma Nuova" is daily adding fresh evidences of the extent of the "Old Rome."

A SUCCESSFUL *opera bouffe* is a profitable investment in this age of Offenbach, Hervé, Lecocq, and Co. A year's (345 nights) performance of *La Fille de Madame Angot* in Paris has brought a clear profit of 30,360*l.* to the management of the Folies Dramatiques. The poor of the French capital, who have a right to 10 per cent. of the gross receipts of all theatrical performances, benefitted 5,817*l.*, the publishers of the music and the libretto cleared relatively 3,000*l.* and 1,412*l.*, while the composer, Lecocq, and the authors shared 2,480*l.* between them. This, it should be remembered, is for Paris alone.

A CHAMELEON PLANT has been sent to the *Paris Jardin d'Acclimatation* by the Bishop of Canton. *Après* of this a correspondent writes to the *Times* that some years since when at the island of Penang, in the Straits of Malacca, he wrote to South Australia for seeds of some indigenous plants. Among those sent were some of a very beautiful white convolvulus, with five streaks in the calix. These five streaks gradually changed colour during the day. In the early morning they were pale blue, at mid-day (probably from the powerful action of a tropical sun) they assumed a rich purple tint, and finally a light pink, fading altogether at sunset, and then dying, being ephemeral.

A CURIOUS SPIRITUALISTIC REVELATION is given by a Transatlantic scientific contemporary:—"The spirit photographs which pass current among credulous spiritualists for genuine ghosts of the departed are produced in various ways. The latest and most scientific method is as follows:—The plain background screen, before which the sitter is placed in order to have his portrait taken, is to be painted beforehand with the form of the desired "spirit," the paint being composed of some solution of sulphate of quinine. When this painting dries on the screen it is invisible to the eye; but it sends out rays that have power to impress the photo plate, and thus the image of the person, together with the quinine ghost are simultaneously developed upon the negative."