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The Mercury.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1896. A DISCREDITED OPPOSITION.

Her Majesty's Opposition is assuredly in a very unhappy condition. It was common knowledge, during the past session, that the Liberal House was divided against itself, and that the line of cleavage between Lord Rosebery and his followers was so clearly marked that a split must ultimately occur. But even the best informed politicians on the Unionist side were surprised at the time and manner of Lord Rosebery's resignation of the Liberal leadership. His letter to Mr. Ellis came like a bolt from the blue, and for the first time let a flood of light upon the dark places of Liberal intrigue. It is almost pathetic to read Lord Rosebery's lament—"Scarcely from any quarter do I get explicit support. . . I regret only that I should appear to divide the energies and try the faith of Liberals." And so it came to pass that the ex-Premier was forced to "speak his mind" upon an Edinburgh platform, and explain how he had been manœuvred out of the leadership of his own party. The story is not a pleasant one, and may be recapitulated as follows:— When Mr. Gladstone resigned the Premiership, in the spring of 1894, he recommended the Queen to send for Lord Rosebery and not for Sir W. Harcourt. This is the usage of the constitution. The outgoing Premier is supposed to know best who is most likely to prove his best successor, and the Sovereign as a rule follows his lead. It now appears that Lord Rosebery knew his leadership had no chance of success unless he "received very exceptional support, very exceptional loyalty, and very exceptional co-operation from the party inside and outside Parliament." This, he now declares, he did not receive, and gives three illustrations. "Before," says Lord Rosebery, "we had confronted Parliament for more than two days we were defeated by our own followers by a majority of two. That was not a God-speed to the Government, or any sign of the special and exceptional cordiality and support which was required by a Liberal Government, headed by a peer. The next point to which I would call your attention was that of the general election. I ventured, as it was my duty and my privilege to do, to urge a definite and concentrated policy on the party. That definite and concentrated policy was not adopted. In the third place, the last straw which decided my position was that our leader—for Mr. Gladstone must lead the Liberal party when he wishes—has come forward in a noble and sublime spirit, but he has, equally innocently and unconsciously, himself administered the final coup de grace to his successor." Such were the external difficulties that Lord Rosebery had to contend against. Defeated by his own party in Parliament, he found himself thwarted in his own policy, and finally thrown over by the veteran leader whom he succeeded, As Mr. T. P. O'Connor puts it—"Lord Rosebery may only to indicate a policy for it to be immediately discounted, if not thrown over, by those who were supposed to be his colleagues." Unable to speak in the

House of Commons, he found that his lieutenant there made it a rule to ignore the leader, and Lord Rosebery now confesses that he "kept his position almost beyond the conditions of dignity and self-respect." It is clear, therefore, that the Armenian Question was only the occasion and not the cause of Lord Rosebery's disappearance. We have never thought of the "Peer-Premier" an able leader of men, and, indeed, his brief record as such is strewn with blunders and failures. At the same time, every one with any feeling of patriotism will be constrained to say that if it was only the occasion of his retirement, it was a great occasion, and that his speech was worthy of it. As a general statement of the Eastern Question it leaves little to be desired, while as a trenchant criticism of the fads and follies of the Radical party it is unapproachable. Lord Rosebery literally examined every patent scheme of coercing the Sultan without the European Concert, and showed either that it was useless or must lead to a general war. There was a statesmanlike tone and, at the same time, a patriotic fervour in his whole address, which has struck home. No speech of his whole leadership, we may fairly say, because him so much as that in which he retired from it. So much then for the causes of Lord Rosebery's retirement. What are the prospects of new leadership for the Opposition? The most sanguine organs of Radicalism are sufficiently perturbed at the present state of affairs. After all, Lord Rosebery's own admission of failure is full of significance to those who have been watching the trend of political life of late years. It has been a matter of observation that the Liberal party ever since 1886 have been going from bad to worse. There has been a steady process of deterioration as well as of disintegration. The great split of 1886 has been working out to its logical consequences, and we are now face to face with its final result. What was heretofore decently veiled is now obvious to the whole world. The British Liberal party to-day occupies two separate camps. The Liberal newspapers are at war amongst themselves, some crying "a Rosebery," others "a Harcourt." The Irish party stands aloof, knowing full well that any change in the Liberal leadership can do them more harm than good. The war of factions is bitter enough, but what it will be hereafter it is not hard to imagine. Victory for one side can only increase the other in proportion. Sir William Harcourt has undoubtedly treated his chief badly; and if he reaps the fruits of his tactics, it is not likely that the admirers of Lord Rosebery will love the successful intriguer more. Such being the state of the Liberal factions it is not curious to find despondency the prevailing note amongst the rank and file of Liberal politicians throughout the country. They will naturally turn to such men as Lord Salisbury, the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain, for light and leading in the crucial questions of the Empire. The evils of political faction could have no more useful object-lesson than the present lamentable condition of the Liberal Party.

out of an evening without running a gauntlet of ribaldry and obscenity more fitted for the lowest parts of Whitechapel or Seven Dials than a respectable neighbourhood like Hackney. We would draw attention to a letter which we publish elsewhere; from one who is a victim of this scandalous evil. Had we published that letter in full, it would have opened our readers' eyes to the gross immorality which undoubtedly prevails, a state of things which is a disgrace to any community. We know not whether the onus of providing proper oversight rests with the London County Council or the Police Commissioners, but between them the fault of the present state of things most assuredly rests, and we incline to the opinion that the duty of putting a stop to this outrageous state of affairs rests with the County Council. Had it rested with our own local authorities we venture to assert that the nuisance would have been stopped long since. Hackney ratepayers have to pay heavily enough in all conscience, and it is only right that they should be protected from such scandalous scenes as are of nightly occurrence in the various open spaces in the district. It is high time that some drastic measures were taken to put an end to this abominable nuisance. Fining four youths 10s. each will have very little effect. What would be far more effective would be to strengthen the hands of the keepers by a force of plain clothes officers and sending every one caught *flagrante delicto* for a term of imprisonment without the option of a fine. In the meantime, if the inhabitants of the district combine together in making a strong protest in the proper quarters, there is no doubt whatever but that the authorities will be forced to take action in the matter. While the present state of affairs continues Hackney is gaining an unenviable notoriety, which it certainly does not merit, and it is sincerely to be hoped that means will shortly be found to purge the neighbourhood of what is undoubtedly a gross scandal.

BETHNAL Green has lost a very hard worker, by the departure, after fifteen years in the East End, of the Rev. the Hon. A. G. Lawley. For ten years, working with conspicuous zeal and self-denial, he has been Curate in charge of St. Andrew's, Bethnal Green, the parish in which the Oxford House movement originated. Mr. Lawley was recently married, by the Bishop of Stepney at All Saints', Ennismore Gardens, to Miss May Ethel Donaldson (daughter of the late Sir Stewart Alexander Donaldson), whose brother is Vicar of S. Mary-of-Eton, Hackney Wick, a parish still popularly known as the "Eton Mission."

The following a list of Court days at Shoreditch County Court for November and December.—Tuesday, November 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th, December 1st, 8th, 15th; Thursday, November 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th, December 3rd and 10th. These are the dates as at present fixed, but are subject to alteration by the judge.

MR. CHARLES CRUFT held his poultry, pigeon and cage bird show, at the People's Palace, Mile End Road, on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of this week, and on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday next, he announces a cat, cavy, rabbit and mouse show at the same place.

ROWDYISM AND IMMORALITY. For a long time past the inhabitants of Hackney, especially those whose residences adjoin the open spaces, have been loud in their protestations against the rowdyism and indecent behaviour of the youths and girls who frequent the locality at night. In vain have our local authorities impressed upon the London County Council and the Police Commissioners the necessity for an increased number of police to cope with the nuisance, the evil still continues, even if it does not grow worse, and the state of affairs is such that no respectable person can move

Mr. WILLIAM A. MUMMERY representative of Messrs. Worthington & Co., Limited, Burton-on-Trent, and London, has consented to preside at the forthcoming annual dinner of the North-East London Licensed Victuallers and Beer Sellers Trade Protection Association, the head-quarters of which are at the "Prince of Wales," Bishops Road, Bethnal Green.

CORRESPONDENCE. The columns of this Journal are at all times open to correspondents for a free expression of their views, but the Editor desires it to be distinctly understood that he is not to be regarded as necessarily acquiescing in the opinions so put forth. Whatever is intended for publication must be authenticated by the name and address of the writer, not necessarily for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith. No notice whatever can be taken of anonymous contributions.

HACKNEY DOWNS NUISANCE. To the Editor of THE MERCURY. Sir,—Last Thursday night four young men were taken into custody by one of the town's policemen for riotous conduct there, and were fined ten shillings each by the presiding magistrate at the North London Police-court. We, the inhabitants of Queensdown Road, have of late been sadly pestered by the conduct of the young men and women who gather together on the avenue before our houses, indeed the "plague" has been getting worse and worse for the last two years. A few years ago we had a public meeting, and also petitioned the County Council and the result was two policemen were placed there every evening up to about eleven o'clock. The nuisance was put down, but of late has been withdrawn, with the result that matters are getting worse and worse. We fervently appeal through you to the district members of the County Council to protect us from this scourge. It is quite within their powers to do so. I am quite sure if they only knew half the things that are going on here they would to a man rise and clear away this nuisance. Last summer I asked the policeman to try and keep these young people more quiet, but his answer was, "How can I be here and over there at the same time?" He took me to a part where a most disgraceful state of affairs prevailed. The officer said he had no power to remove them as things were.

My answer to this is if the Council have power to make such changes as they do constantly, they have power to move these young people to other parts where they would not be a constant source of annoyance to so many people as they now are. The conduct of young girls aged from fifteen to twenty is most disgraceful, would that their parents could keep them at home. If you can help us in this matter we shall all of us bless you. "ONE OF THE AGRIEVED."

LEA DANGERS. To the Editor of THE MERCURY. Sir,—To those correspondents who expressed so graphically their experiences, under the title of "A Leaver," and who so carefully delineated the situations of danger to which they had been exposed, whilst taking their pasture upon that treacherous river, it may probably prove interesting and satisfactory to know, that a letter submitted to the offices of the Lea Conservancy upon the subject referred to in the columns of THE MERCURY, has met a kind and considerate response from that body. The suggestion that the Conservancy should be empowered to close the barges at night will subsequently be placed before the Board of Conservators. Those who have an interest in this matter may hope then for a favourable conclusion, but still this is only a suggestion, and it may be freely by the Conservancy has no power over the control of barges, but they undoubtedly have an influence and power of recommendation to those owners whose craft navigate the river Lea. If this is so we may feel with an amount of assurance that the result will be a success, and be the means of removing a danger of some considerable nature.

The conditions of the river Lea would be very favourable, if the river itself was at a greater remove from the metropolis, but being on the confines of a great town like London, the river is greatly frequented by rowers and riverside pedestrians. Even more so has it been since the diminutive suburb of East and North London of 40 years ago, has swollen to the mighty eastern section of "Greater London." The stream itself is somewhat narrow, and generally very deep, with its banks so subtle undercurrents, while the bed over which it flows, has many holes, which as the sub-currents pass over act as suckers, on the scale of a miniature Maelstrom, that in the power of themselves could arrest even a good swimmer from rising to the surface. This, no doubt, is one of the causes why the number of people who fall into the water, and are taken to keep to the proper side both up and down. It is frequently owing to the reckless rowing on the one hand and the careless rowing on the other, that fatalities occur. When, as we do at times, see men racing down a narrow stream, at a speed almost sufficient to ram a boat, to the peril and detriment of careful swimmers, we cannot wonder at accidents occurring. Moreover should there happen to be healthy rivalry existing between two boats' crews, and absent or in their endeavours to pass, occupy almost the breadth of river reach, again are rowers exposed to a great danger.

One case I may cite, which took place immediately below Tottenham Lock, of the flood gate. Three men heedless of the danger they were exposing themselves and others to, at horse-play speed, collided with a boat, which three young fellows were pulling; the boat in a moment capsized and sank, two of the three being drowned. The gross recklessness on the part of scullers should be prevented. Enough lives have been lost between the three miles stretch down from Tottenham Lock, and I venture to assert there is not another portion of any river in the United Kingdom of equal distance, that shows such a record of drownings during the year.

Conservative claims.....716 Radical claims.....696 Conservative majority 20

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TO prevent this, a restriction should be placed on that section of the river, containing regulation and rate of speed. Then again there are many deaths that happen from the banks of the river, sufficient light upon that matter has been revealed recently in your contemporary *The Hackney and Kingsland Gazette*. To meet and provide against these sad accidents the towing path should be kept in a state of repair, and that section of the path between Verden's boat-house and Tottenham, has been in a state of sad neglect for many years, the high stones that protrude above the surface of the path, are not only a danger, but a great inconvenience to the pedestrian community. It would not cost any considerable expense to keep life-buoys, placed at handy distances along the river bank. For it is between Lea Bridge and Tottenham Lock, that that portion of the river has rightly earned the name of the "death trap."

Table with 4 columns: Divisions, Lodged, Sustained, Objections. Shows counts for various divisions and objections.

HAGGERSTON REVISION. The Revision of the lists for the Haggerston Division for the Parliamentary Borough of Shoreditch was completed on Friday evening, 9th October.

It may be said that the representative of the Conservative party, Mr. Stanley Mockett, called the attention of the Revising Barrister to a number of names that appeared on the Overseers' List, and upon satisfactory evidence being given by Mr. G. J. Protheroe, thirty three of these were struck off, principally aliens, deads, and duplicates, these are not accounted for in the above figures.

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