

VANITY FAIR - Volume XXVI

“A Weekly Show of Political, Social, and Literary Wares.”

Issues published in the half-year, from July 2, 1881 to December 31, 1881.

Cartoons and selected excerpts

11. Sept. 10, 1881

NOTES.

Sir William Harcourt has at present a fair claim to the questionable honour of being the best hated man in the three kingdoms. The pet aversion of the Tory Press and the particular bugbear of the Radical *Echo*, he has now become the red-rag of Home Rule. While Lord Selborne was enunciating empty platitudes about a reconciled Ireland at Westminster, Mr. Parnell at Omagh was busily engaged in stigmatising Her Majesty's Secretary of State in the Home Department as “Red Indian Harcourt—the most disreputable coward, and the most unscrupulous liar and slanderer in Government.” It is too bad to call him a Red Indian, but it has been suggested to me that his eminent and peculiar services to his Chief during the One Bill Session have fairly earned for him the euphonious soubriquet of “Billy's Bully.”

STATESMEN—No. CCCLXXI

“The Times” by Spy

Mr. John Walter, M.P.

The original John Walter was a man who saw the uses to which a commercial connection with a newspaper might be put. He was a shrewd man of business, and he contrived to possess himself of the greater portion of the property in the *Times* newspaper and to find men able to supply the intellectual portion of that commercial venture. The present John Walter inherited his grandfather's and father's property, together with a magnificent idea of its importance. He was born three-and-sixty years ago, was sent to Eton and to Oxford to be veneered, got called formally to the Bar, and has married twice. At nine-and-twenty he went into politics and Parliament, and he now occupies, though not without protest and an excellent chance of losing it, the seat for Berkshire which he father held before him.

Mr. Walter represents the results of two generations of lucky speculation in trade advertisements. He holds himself therefore to be a distinct power in the State. He calls himself a Liberal, but he is persuaded that it is his mission to hold the balance even between all the Parties. When he rises to address an afflicted House of Commons he plainly shows his opinion that a superior modern Daniel has come to judgment. But he has never yet betrayed any power of bringing any ability of his

own to bear upon the subjects on which he prosed. He is very pompous but very platitudinarian. He never yet added a new idea, a new fact, or even a new phrase to any subject of public import. In spite therefore of the sedulous printing, at inordinate length, of his dull commonplaces in his dull newspaper, he has remained to this day without even enough of personal influence to make him a knight. It is felt that it is not he who inspires the *Times*, but the *Times* that coaches him ; and his efforts are but too despairingly and too unsuccessfully directed to following with some appearance of personal sincerity the strange backing and filling of that insincere and floundering journal. He is not an able writer, he is not a profound thinker, he is not a good speaker, nor an organiser ; he is an advertisement agent and the broker of the scribes who in their own leaders call themselves "thoughtful persons." Under his brokerage the *Times* has become a dull and brainless daily muddle, which supports on its old traditions a vast mass of useful and profitable trade announcements. His father invented Mr. Barnes and Mr. Delane ; he has invented Mr. Chenery and Mr. Walter junior.

Yet Mr. Walter has a certain amount of plodding ability. He is a wealthy man. He is a trustworthy and honourable tradesman and country squire. He is a sober and decent practitioner of the private virtues. And if he were not so solemnly bumptious he might be a partially useful person even in public life.

JEHU JUNIOR

VANITIES.

I learn that I was misinformed as to the nature of Sir Vincent Eyre's illness, and am assured that this gentleman is suffering, not from softening of the brain, but from painful and serious affection of the hip-joint. He is now with Lady Eyre at Aix-Bains, is able to sit up daily, and is, it is hoped, improving.

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The fifty calm individuals who watched a little child drowning in Kensington Gardens would be much beloved by certain farmers in the Orange Free State. A little Basuto child fell into deep water. A lot of Boer farmers saw the little thing struggling and drowning, and would not try to save it. These men said, "Let the thing be. It's only a Kaffir." Lady Florence Dixie failed to take this view of the situation. She considered the baby to be quite within the range of practical politics, so she plunged in and saved its life. The benighted mother was wild with gratitude. This showed her savage nature. The Boers were much surprised by the emphatic nature of the remarks which Lady Florence addressed to them when the child was safe.



Vincent Brooks, Day & Son, Lith.

"The Times"