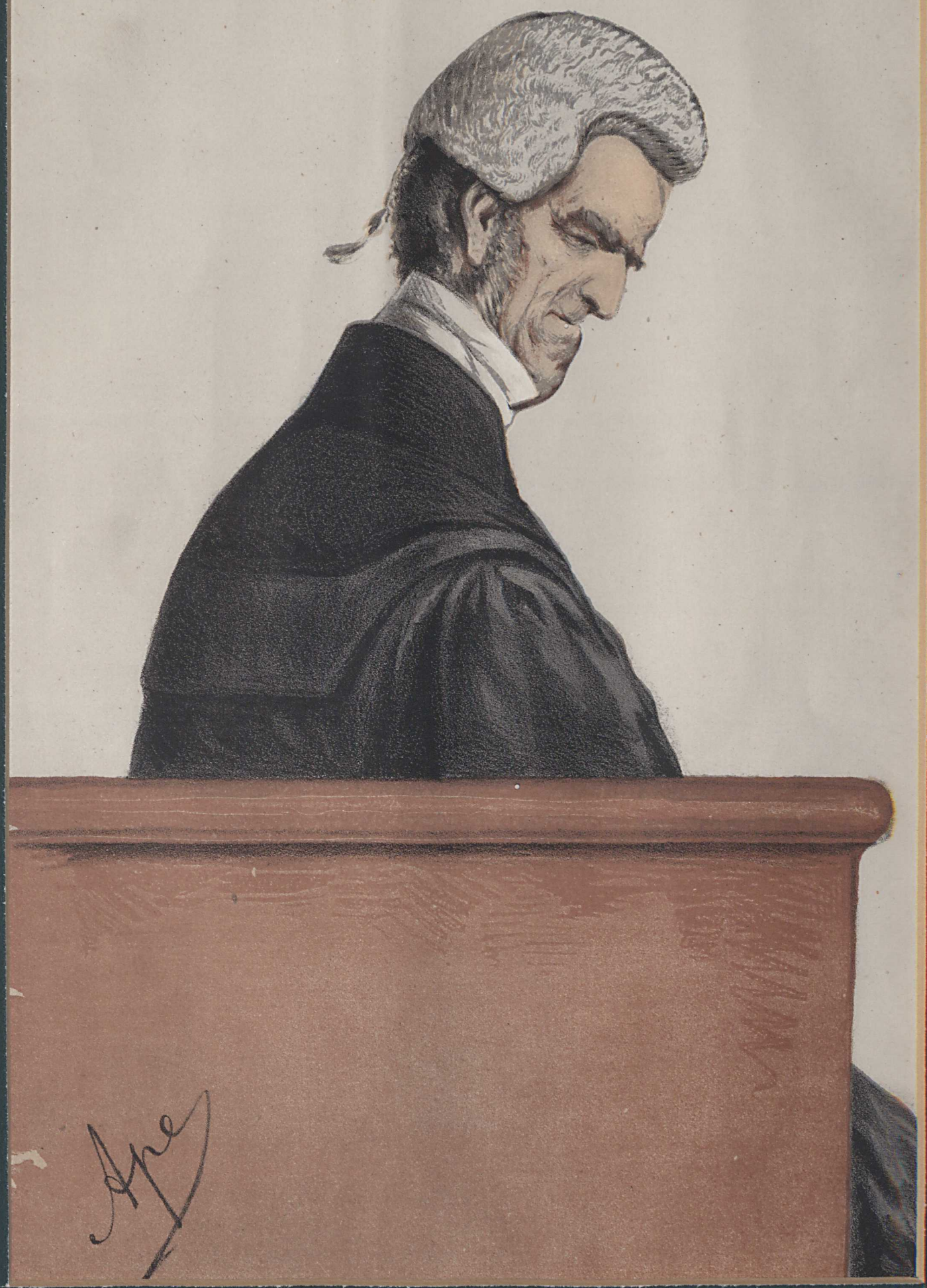
1871

Judge Shaw-Lefevre

Loyola Law School Los Angeles



VANITY FAIR.

LONDON, JULY 1, 1871.

MEN OF THE DAY.—No. XXVII.

SIR JOHN GEORGE SHAW-LEFEVRE, K.C.B.

THE name of Shaw-Lefevre is peculiarly and above all others identified with the history of Queen Victoria's Parliaments, and, like his brother, Lord Eversley, Sir John Lefevre has passed the greater portion of a long and laborious life in Parliamentary service. Elected as a member of the Lower House as long as forty years ago, he at once asserted himself as a man of great ability, and after a singularly short apprenticeship was appointed to an Under-Secretaryship. Fortunately, however, for the State, he has not followed the ordinary partisan career in which most of our best men seek distinction, but has elected to follow the more quiet and dignified paths of officialism. He has been employed perhaps more than any other public man now alive in the initiation and elaboration of undertakings having a novel and experimental character which have since become permanent institutions of the country. The settlement of the Australian Colonies, the new systems of Civil Service both at home and in India, and the Poor Law of 1834, were all shaped in great part from his suggestions, while the electoral system still bears the mark of his hand, inasmuch as he proposed the divisions of the English Counties which were embodied almost without a change in the Reform Act of 1832. To this day there is no man who is more consulted in matters of difficulty, public and private. For twenty-three years he has been the Clerk of the Parliament, as which it is his business to keep all the Parliamentary records, and to superintend all the mechanical portion of the Lords' business. He it is who attends the Sovereign to receive her decisions upon bills, and he it is who, standing with his back to Mr. Speaker, and turning his head with the condescension of reflected royalty, announces the Queen's assent in the time-honoured words, "La "reyne le veult," or its denial by the formula "La "reyne s'avisera." Sir John happily possesses a bearing and presence most appropriate to the traditions that are embodied in these forms, and his appearance in the House of Commons is always calculated to remind the members that they are living under a system which may seem to the vain to be laughable, but which from its antiquity and success must always be respectable.

JEHU JUNIOR.

ST. STEPHEN'S AND HURLINGHAM.

MY DEAR VANITY,—What is the use of correspondents writing stuff and nonsense about cruelty at Hurlingham, and finding fault with the ladies for enjoying sport? As for the pigeons, I am sure if they could speak, they enjoy the excitement as much as we do : it is much better for a blue rochet to be killed by charming young men with blue blood in their veins than to be committed to a vulgar cook, to be served as a pigeon *farci*—but what I wish to say is, that there are other sports just as bad as shooting at Hurlingham. George, my cousin, who has just been returned for Nocounty, took me to the Ladies' Gallery last Monday, to see a new sport that has been invented, called Ayrton-baiting. By the by, next to Hurlingham, I do not know a better place for a quiet flirtation than the Lady's Gallery. No husbands or lovers or brothers are allowed to go there. But Ayrton-baiting is capital fun. It generally comes on twice a week—Tuesday and Friday. Monday was an extra day, because the House of Commons wanted money, or something of that kind, and could not get it without turning out Ayrton. I know, dear VANITY, that you have Mr. Beresford-Hope in your Gallery, but you ought to do him again. I am sure he would look well if you could catch him at the moment of his first rush at Ayrton, who awaits the attack, his eyes fixed on the gaslight, his hands pressed on his knees, and his lips compressed—a study of concentrated indignation. Mr. Beresford-Hope was inarticulate with passion, and all I could hear was "Barry ! "Barry ! Barry !" which I suppose is a kind of "Tally-ho !" for immediately Mr. Cowper-Temple, Lord John Manners, Mr. Baillie Cochrane, all called out "Barry ! Barry !" They all seemed to fasten on poor Ayrton at once. At last the sport grew most exciting. Ayrton sprang from his place, flew first at one, then at the other. Mr. Hope pulled at a roll of papers, and Ayrton caught hold of a small green box. I thought a regular fight was going to take place, but a weakly little man, called Dodson, managed to pacify them all, and there was a pause of some minutes. After Mr. Hope was rested, and Ayrton said something aloud, all the sportsmen rushed at him again : there were confused cries of "It's a chapel !" "No, it's a vault !" "A coal-hole !" "A dining-room ! !" "You are not a Christian !" "Where's "the Reformation ?"—"Where's the Virgin who was in the "vault ?" Mr. Ayrton uttered, with a stentorian voice, and was answered by a chorus of voices—"Chapel ! chapel !" Ayrton sank down, prepared to yield up the vault—I believe, even the ghost. A shout of triumph was raised by the sportsmen, and the Ayrton-baiting was over for that day. The next meet is fixed for Monday, when the field will be larger than usual, as a number of the Foreign Office are expected to join it. Good sport is expected. If St. Stephen's don't come off, I shall go to the Hurlingham instead.

Ever, dear VANITY,
Your little friend,
THE BELGRAVIAN BROUGHAM GIRL.

THE INSURRECTION IN LONDON.

PROBABLY the man who should have predicted eighteen months ago that England would be the scene of the events which have happened there would have been regarded as a lunatic; and possibly that appreciation of his prediction tends to explain how it is that these things have come about. There never was a people, and, above all, there never was a Government that lived in so serene an atmosphere of security as ours ; certainly there never was one which up to the very last moment remained in such complete and utter ignorance of the dangerous forces that had been so long accumulating under the surface of society. We used to look placidly on at continental revolutions to judge them and their victims with a pitying contempt for the nations who were not as we were, and to accept their departures from our model as a full explanation of all their internal struggles. We were a united people, we thought, and said again and again, all rallied round the Throne and the institutions of the country. Foreign greed might threaten us, but we smiled at the idea of domestic troubles ; yet it is these that have so ruined our dear country, and made it the terrible spectacle it now is.

Thoughtful men had often remarked that, although we had had political, we had never had a social revolution, and had asked themselves whether it was possible that the semi-feudal state of society which we had inherited from old times, and pretended to maintain almost unmodified through modern days, could last. They remarked that with the increase of wealth and the march of civilisation, the lot of the main body of the people had remained unchanged for the better; that, indeed, it had rather changed for the worse, and they foresaw the time when mere politics would no longer be accepted as the true ground of conflict, and when the English *prolétaire* would sternly demand that larger share of the good things of this world to which he holds himself entitled. Reflections of this kind were accepted as amusing, but no serious importance was ever attached to them, for there seemed to the governing classes to be no cause for alarm. The great mass of the people were practically dumb, and although there was, and had long been, an incredible intellectual activity among them, no sign of it reached those who lived out of the people's intimacy. The newspapers of those days served us very ill, and offered no hint of the spirit that had grown up among them. A contemptuous paragraph occasionally recorded the meeting of a few Socialists and Republicans in obscure taverns at the East-end of London, the Clerkenwell meetings, which subsequently became so terribly famous, were recorded now and then in a line or two, and they and the Hyde Park demonstrations were alike treated with unsparing ridicule as the mere efforts of individual "mob orators." Of the deep and desperate spirit of discontent that was working below, of the sullen determination that had grown up to effect a change when the time should come, we heard nothing, and knew nothing. The working-man was, indeed, known to be miserable, but it was held to be more than enough if he was occasionally patronised, if institutes and clubs were provided for him out of charity, and presided over by a stray peer. While we were dreaming that we were united, we were, in fact, already two distinct nations, the one of which had no knowledge of, and nothing in common with the other.

Perhaps things might have gone on thus for a long time had it not been for the blunders of the Government—blunders which appear now quite incredible. The series of measures by which they at once irritated the people and abandoned all chance of resisting their irritation when it should come to a head, are now unhappily matters of history. The Sunday Closing Act prevented them from purchasing their little stock of food and drink on Sundays, while the Parks Regulation Act, unwisely strained by Mr. Bruce, excluded them from all chance of fresh air and exercise. Most of the other acts of which the 1872 Session bore so large a crop were, like these, contrived with the object of promoting public morality and of protecting the poor against innumerable abuses and dangers, but they all came to the same thing. Their final and only appreciable result always was to narrow the circle of the people's liberty, to prevent them from doing something they wished to do, and to make them do something else they did not wish to do. The end of it was that they lived in a perpetual state of regulation. Compulsory registration at birth; compulsory vaccination soon after; compulsory education; compulsory abstention during stated hours from that work through which alone they could hope to eat; compulsory habitations, with compulsory conditions of ventilation, drainage, and smells; compulsory abstention from liquor on Sundays; and, to crown all, compulsory misery verging on starvation from one end of life to the other—such was the lot of the great mass of the people of England. Everything was fenced off from them by Acts of Parliament—the land, by a new and stringent law of trespass, passed in order to protect game; the sea, by the Fisheries Amendment Act, designed to prevent too much fish from being taken out of it; and the very air and sky, by the law which forbade them to enjoy either on the only day they could do so. These networks grew up so gradually that most of us scarcely knew of them. The poor and the labouring class, however, felt them, and they added precisely that constant irritation which was required to bring about a catastrophe. At the same time that the Government of the country was affording so much food for discontent, it had in mere wantonness annihilated all its means of self-defence. The English army, once the best in the world, had been completely changed in composition and character by the Army Regulation Act. The officers were no longer idle and ignorant, yet gallant and influential, gentlemen, leading their men by an irresistible prestige of caste, but needy; professional men, who had entered the army as they would have entered any other trade. The men, too, had undergone a like change. They were no longer the hardy, adventurous roughs who had hitherto filled the ranks, but "respectable," military-institute-frequenting prigs, who thought themselves as good as their officers—in which they were, perhaps, not far wrong. The result was that, as a fighting-machine ready for any use, and prepared to embark in any undertaking at the word of command, the army had ceased to exist, and that, although even more eager than it had ever before been for foreign wars, it was no longer to be counted upon for dealing with domestic disturbances.

The spring of 1874 at last produced an explosion. It was a small matter that led to it. Mr. Gladstone had retired from public life into a monastery, and was only known by his periodical pamphlets on the exhaustion of the coal-fields of England, while Mr. Lowe had taken his place as Premier, retaining therewith the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer. In the Budget he proposed a tax on costermongers' barrows, with the double object of providing a surplus and of removing one of the great public eye-sores, and as it was put "the last stronghold of false "weights and measures." The costermongers attempted to hold a meeting in Hyde Park, which was dispersed with some bloodshed by the police and the guards. The costermongers, however, bore through the streets the dead body of one Joe, an inoffensive, half-witted fellow, who had been killed in the fray, and the excitement became very great. The newspapers spoke in becoming terms of the "lamentable blood-"shed," but denounced pitilessly, and with withering ridicule, the "guilty attempt to make an unhappy accident the pretext "for further disturbances." The body of poor Joe was rescued by the police and secretly interred, the tax was agreed to, and everything appeared to resume its usual aspect. In the night of the 3rd of April, however, the armouries of several Metropolitan Volunteer corps were broken into, and the rifles taken away, and the next afternoon men went about whispering that something terrible had happened. The Tower, the Mint, and all the docks had been seized by the Republicans, and the Bank, which after a bare escape of falling had closed its gates, was surrounded by them, and the few guards and *employés* blockaded. They occupied also St. Paul's, and had thrown up two barricades on Ludgate Hill, with others joining them on the one side to the river and extending round on the other to the north. Some thirty policemen and the whole of the small body of guards that defended the Tower had been killed or wounded, and London was stricken with terror to find that a revolutionary army had been silently organised in its midst, and was then actually in possession of a portion of the city. The Great Eastern Railway was in the hands of the insurgents; but all the other lines were besieged by terrified people eager for flight, and the night mails to France were crammed with Englishmen going to seek in Paris, under the tranquil reign of the re-established Emperor, that security which seemed no longer to exist in London. In the evening a proclamation appeared, signed by "the Republican Committee," and setting forth their grievances and their demands. They required the abdication of the Queen, and of the House of Lords, and the immediate election of a new House of Parliament by universal suffrage under the ballot.

The result is known. A first attack, made in too great a contempt of the insurgents and too much reliance upon the handful of troops sent against them, failed, and it was necessary to shell the Tower from the river, to bring up to London all the available forces, and to make a regular investment of the eastern end of London, which was not recaptured until it had been half reduced to ruins. Then came the war, the invasion, the Battle of Dorking, and therewith the final extinction of England as a nation. There are many who pretend that Bismarck would never have forced war upon us had he not been tempted by the spectacle of our internal disruption, who maintain that that disruption was wantonly provoked, and who declare that all our ruin has arisen from the ill-starred tax on the costermongers' barrows.

Blanc-Bec.

London, 25th June, 1875.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

We've had impurity of every kind
With open voting flagrantly combined—
Shall we their opposites together find?

1. He claims his title from the First great Cause;
   He construes heavenly and makes earthly laws.
2. A word adopted from a foreign tongue,
   Which, short itself, is oft in saying long.
3. 'Tis like a lacquey walking still behind
   Some other thing or person you will find;
   Nor can you change its place, for if you do
   You change its very name and nature too.
4. Add the one to the other, you'll find it appear
   That they give all the weeks, except one, in the year.
5. A useful word to cover carelessness
   And make the greater blunder look the less.
6. A creature that's now quite extinct we are told,
   When new names are given to principles old.

Choker.

ANSWER TO LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

L e s S
I. & U.
Q u e e N
U p l a n D
O p h e l i A
R a i l w a Y

Correct answers received from "Coxswain," "London "Sparrow," "J. F. O.," "Sciatica," "An Irish Howl," "Eva "Charlotte," "Rodwac and Co.," "Veevee," "Puck," "Pow-"der and Shot," "H. F. L. A.," "Buckland," "Welsh Rab-"bits," "Saltuarius, domi," "Garsington," "Two Choughs," "D. E. H.," "Sweet Peas," "Warfield Hive," "Dulcimer," "Ruby's Ghost," "Minna," "Malesherbes," "Peal of Bells," "Anno Domini," "Maglona," "Partner Joe," "A Yorkshire "Tyke," "The Twister," "Fogie from Finchley," "Bunch (late "Bunch and Pie)," "Frou-frou," "Uly," "Voices from the "Downs," "The Rumtifoozle," "Telescope," "Fid and John," "Newton (late Skinningrove)," "D. M. C.," "Zara and Two "Grebes," "The Mumblers," "Gosberton Partridges," "Row" (by telegraph); and twenty-one incorrect.