

The following is a faithful picture of the English House of Commons, especially with respect to the Ladies' Gallery as seen from the Visitor's Gallery. It is given by a Holiday Correspondent of the London Baptist.—Ed. C. M.

The "Deer Pen" in the House of Commons.

What do I mean by the "deer-pen"? Nothing more nor less than the Ladies' Gallery in the House of Commons, which is a disgrace to the nineteenth century, yet into which it is more difficult to penetrate than into Buckingham Palace. Admission can only be obtained from members, who ballot for seats seven days in advance. As there are 567 members the struggle for seats is animated.

Time was when women had equal rights with men in visiting the Commons. As far back as 1675 my sex occupied the Strangers' Gallery—a privilege they enjoyed until February, 1778, when a great debate took place on the state of the nation. The Duchess of Devonshire, Lady Norton, and other grandes dames, not only occupied the seats ordinarily assigned to them, but took possession of those under the front gallery. According to "Grey's Debates," a Captain Johnstone of the navy, angered that the House should have been cleared of male strangers, among whom were friends he had introduced, insisted upon the withdrawal of all strangers. A rule then existed which enabled any one member to exclude visitors—an absurd rule, which has only been recently modified. No less than two hours were required to enforce this order, and that two hours' scuffle with the weaker sex led to their banishment from the Commons.

From 1778 to 1834 women obtained a glimpse of the House by looking through a hole over the largest chandelier—a hole constructed to carry off hot air and the smoke of candles! Before the present Houses of Parliament were designed, when legislation was carried on in a temporary building, women were allowed to stand and peep through eyelet holes bored in a sort of box erected behind the Strangers' Gallery. Far better is the sheep-pen of to-day, but it is a pen.—Originally it was divided into three compartments of seven persons each. A dozen years ago, however, the dividing walls were removed. Since then other improvements have been made, the last of which is the elevation of the ceiling and an attempt at ventilation; but the gallery still remains small, dark, and well-nigh intolerable. Hung high in the air, like a bird-cage, a heavy iron grating conceals its occupants from the view of the House, and unless a woman is fortunate enough to obtain one of the eighteen front seats, she sees nothing and hears with difficulty. Yet when, in 1875, Serjeant Sherlock proposed to remove the prison-bars, he was unmercifully snubbed.

On the night of Sir Charles Dilke's speech regarding the expenses of the Civil List the Opposition cleared out male strangers, including the press, while women were left in undisputed possession of their pen, as they were not supposed to exist. Thanks to this fiction, a woman was the only person who reported the most extraordinary Parliamentary row that has occurred for many a day. It was then predicted that Sir Charles Dilke had ruined his career. Today he is Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and to him is left the destiny of Greece. The whirligig of time proves who is wise in his generation.

Through many windings, up innumerable stairs, women attain the door leading to their pen. On my last visit, one hour before the House assembled, it was locked, and a dozen women stood before it ready to make a raid on the front seats. At last the imposing usher appeared, unlocked the door, and the scramble began, but we were stopped in our mad career by the imperturbable person in black, who, after comparing our names with those on his list, allowed us to proceed. By a firm but not riotous display of muscle I secured a front seat. "This is beautiful, is it not?" said an elderly lady to her companion.—"What have you brought with you?" "Sherry, sandwiches, and some sal volatile." "Very sensible, my dear," added the elderly lady. "Just before leaving home I had some sausages, because they are staying." Women speak little in this pen, the effect of the grating being depressing. No men are allowed, M.P.'s

excepted, who drop in occasionally to see their friends. The only diversion is tea, or a chop served in a retiring room.

The moment M. P.'s enter the House, they remove their hats, bow to the speaker, and generally cover their heads on sitting down. Whether this very uncivil and unbecoming custom is due to there being no place for hats saving under the benches, where they may be kicked about, or to the assumption that law-makers are superior beings, entitled to wear their hats in the presence of law itself, as the heads of certain Spanish grandees remain covered in the presence of royalty, I leave to imagination. One thing is certain, keeping the head constantly covered, does not improve the hair. Bald heads are many among Commons. A generous growth of hair is exceptional, even young men carefully brushing their locks over the tops of their heads to conceal the coming skating rink. Some heads resemble magnified billiard balls. I have gazed upon a bald cranium where the self-esteem ran up to such a point that all the hair slid down hill, and took refuge at the base of the brain.

To distinguish one man from another requires far-sighted vision, and the effect of several hundred hats is not more imposing than an equal number of stove-pipes. Gladstone and John Bright are almost the only men whose heads are regularly uncovered. It is most interesting to see those two clever men sitting beside each other with their heads together, looking like venerable owls. Gladstone seems to enjoy sitting on the middle of his back, and John Bright apparently derives comfort from crossing first one leg and then the other. This sort of thing proves that even great men are human. Lord Hartington will wear his hat, and all we learn from our pen is that he is tall and slight, and Saxon in colouring.

Appropos of hats, it's as much as a man's life is worth—in society—to wear ought but the regulation stove-pipe. There may be M. P.'s who dare to face the Speaker with billy cock or soft-felt hat in hand, but I doubt it. The only man I ever heard of equal to such an amount of bravery is Joseph Cowen, the member for Newcastle and owner of the Radical Newcastle Chronicle. He at all times has the courage of his opinions. Whether people agree with him or not, all admired his pluck—a pluck backed by brains. Joseph Cowen would be an orator were it not for a Northumberland burr which prevents him from being fully understood. "Very eloquent speaker is Mr. Cowen," once exclaimed Lord Beaconsfield; "what a pity no one knows what he is talking about!" Cowen the Radical, wears a slouch hat, but I should no more expect to see Sir William Harcourt in such a covering than I should expect to see elephants in satin gowns. Talk about woman's blind devotion to fashion! Did ever woman cling as fondly to crinoline as man clings to his stove-pipe? Never!

The House assembles at 3.45 p. m. First, the doors fly open; then the "Speaker" is announced. The Usher of the Black Rod, bearing the mace, bows in the Speaker, who is arrayed in long black gown and flowing wig. He is followed by the chaplain in another wig and gown. The Speaker mounts his throne; the Black Rod lays the mace (a gold crown poised on a red velvet pole long enough to handle) across the lower end of the table. M. P.'s of a punctual turn of mind—their name is not legion—suddenly appear, and the chaplain reads the prayers of the day. We in the deer-pen hear nothing. The chaplain may think that effort is useless.

After the chaplain has galloped through his duty he exits backwards; many of the M. P.'s rush out, as though they had just remembered they ought to be somewhere else, and business begins. A clerk in wig and gown, standing at the head of the table, reads about petitions and other matters in so mumbling a voice that I can't hear. M. P.'s don't wish to, for they jump up and apparently say things to themselves, for not one word reaches us women. It is a tradition in the provinces that members are glued to their seats from 3.45 p. m., until about seven o'clock, when they dash home, embrace their wives, if they have any, swallow a chop, and return to im-molate themselves on the altar of their country until three or five o'clock in the morning. Poor provinces. When M. P.'s are really wanted a bell

warns them, and in five minutes they are in their seats ready for a division. Of course, speakers like Gladstone and John Bright always command a full house, but nine times out of ten members know how they intend to vote. Why, then, should they bore themselves by listening to commonplace arguments, delivered in commonplace and hesitating language? The only persons obliged to endure all the talk are the doomed reporters, the Speaker, and the Sergeant-at-Arms. The reporters are saved from softening of the brain by being constantly relieved. What prevents Speaker and Sergeant from going mad I don't know. There they sit, and sit, and sit, facing each other at the two ends of the House, one patiently hearing all the good, bad, and indifferent English, the other constantly answering all sorts of questions. Never a moment's peace are they allowed until eight o'clock, when a recess is announced that these devoted public servants may have half-an-hour in which to snatch a hasty meal. If this isn't quiet martyrdom, what is it?

KATE FIELD.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger. Another Exegesis of John iii. 5.

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

MR. EDITOR,—

I have read with much interest Rev. Mr. Richan's Exegesis of the above passage in the Christian Messenger of July 21st; but, though I entertain for him the highest respect, I cannot regard that Exegesis as otherwise than far-fetched, unnatural and unsatisfactory. Mr. R. takes both "water" and "spirit" in a figurative sense,—the former as meaning the Word of God, or the instrument of regeneration; and the latter, not as the Holy Spirit, but as breath, or air, and as symbolizing "the office which the Holy Spirit performs in the work of regeneration and sanctification." He cites passages to show that the Word of God is purifying in its operation upon the soul; which is indeed true, but is far enough from proving that water in the above passage is identical with the word; and does not afford even a probability that such is its meaning. A better claim could be set up for "water" as meaning the "spirit" than that it means the "word." But in my humble opinion neither is the true Exegesis. I think there is a better, more natural and consistent one.

The point we wish to ascertain is this. What is the import of the phrase—"Born of water?" Does it here symbolize the word of God,—the instrument by which regeneration is effected? as Mr. R. labors to show; or, does the phrase refer to baptism as symbolizing the great radical moral change produced in regeneration by the Holy Spirit? The latter is, I believe, the reference intended by the Great Teacher.

Now, as John the Baptist, the Herald of our Lord, had, under immediate Divine direction, used "water," in connexion with the Kingdom of God, which he announced was at hand, and had "baptized in the River Jordan," many who had repented of sin at his call; and, as Jesus himself had submitted to be baptized in "water," and rose out of the waves of Jordan; and, moreover, as Jesus, after this discourse with Nicodemus, went forth immediately into Judea with His disciples and there baptized the converts that came to Him; and, still further, as our Lord knew that the Baptism of believers "in water" was to be the law of His kingdom to the end of time, it seems to me very reasonable to understand the phrase, "born of water," as referring to baptism in "water"; this ordinance symbolizing, as it does, the purifying effected in the human soul by the Holy Spirit in regeneration; and not as referring to the word, or instrument by which that great change is effected.

That our Lord in speaking to Nicodemus, the timid disciple of the great spiritual change necessary in order to enter into the kingdom of God, should make some allusion to the ordinance by which that change is symbolized and by which profession of faith in Him is made, and the observance of which rite is required of all his disciples previous

to their entrance into the visible church of Christ, such reference appears to me most reasonable and appropriate, and is what might have been expected. The sign and thing signified are closely related, and they are found here together. Other passages which throw light upon the phrase in question may now be cited. "The washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Titus iii. 5. This passage Mr. R. regards as "an amplification of our Saviour's words, 'born of water and of the Spirit.'" But strangely enough he, with Donnegan, understands washing here as meaning "water," and as not referring to Baptism, but as a "symbol of that which actually cleanses, which is the Word of God."

But what can this washing, *loutrom*,—bath or bathing of regeneration mean, except it be the *loutrom*,—bath, or bathing, that symbolizes "regeneration"? Mr. R. admits that "baptism is no doubt a symbol of regeneration." The wonder is that, perceiving this, he did not further perceive that here close at hand is furnished ground for a just interpretation of the phrase in question. To make *loutrom* mean "water," and water mean the word or instrument of regeneration, appears to be a strange and circuitous method to get rid of a plain reference to Baptism. Another passage, brought by Mr. R. to sustain his exegesis, is Ephes. v. 25-26; "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word." The word—*loutrom*—bath or bathing, occurs here also, and that, too, in the closest relation to water. This passage is strongly adverse to Mr. R.'s Exegesis; for it is evident that the bathing of water by (*en*—in conformity with,) the word, is plainly distinguished from the word; and cannot, therefore, be identical in meaning with the word,—the rule by which the sacred bath, or baptism is to be administered.

A similar, but still more decisive passage in its reference to Baptism may now be adduced, and in which *loutro*, a verb of cognate signification with *loutrom*, occurs: "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed (*loutromenoi*—bathed) with pure water." Heb. x. 22. Surely this *bathing of the "body"* can refer only to baptism, since baptism is the only ordinance of the New Testament which requires the use of "water" in relation to the body. That baptism does symbolize the washing away of sin, its entire remission and the purifying of the soul from its defilement, is plain from the words of Ananias to the converted soul of Tarsus: "And now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away (bathe away) thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acts xxii. 16. Of course, the blood of Christ only can completely remove sin, but baptism represents its complete removal and the wondrous inward change connected with remission of sins.

Again, the great spiritual change spoken of by our Lord as regeneration, is referred to elsewhere by Him as a resurrection—a new, a heavenly life;—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." John v. 26. The Apostle Paul also speaks of the same great change as a *quicken*ing of those who were dead in trespasses and sins." Ephes. ii. 1, 5. Death and burial are closely related; so also birth and resurrection are not far apart as to import;—in both there is a great and wonderful change,—the prominent idea in each being *life* with all its possibilities and liberty. Not only is life imparted in the renewing of the soul, but death is inflicted on the old carnal life,—the life of sin. Now, baptism is symbolically connected with regeneration, and is similarly connected with life and death. The Apostle Paul brings out two grand things represented in baptism,—death to sin, and life to righteousness; (Romans vi. 1, 5)—the burial in baptism symbolizing the renunciation and obliteration of the past life of sin, and the rising from the waters of baptism, symbolizing the entrance into a new life with its abundant blessings and privileges and expansion into the fulness of bliss. And rising from out the baptismal waters no less aptly symbolizes the wonderful

transition from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ, which is effected in regeneration; and might be appropriately referred to as a birth "of water," (literally out of water.)

Do not the considerations now presented help us to fix the import of the phrase, "Born of water," as referring to baptism,—the sacred sign and symbol of a spiritual,—a new life, and entrance into a divine kingdom? Why not?

But Mr. R. objects that if the phrase be so interpreted, "then baptism regenerates," is essential to salvation, and consequently no one can be saved without it. And so it was apparently to escape this conclusion that the strange exegesis which transmutes "water" into "word," has been sought out.

But I do not apprehend that the Exegesis I have given is fairly open to that objection. It is plain that the New Testament distinguishes the great spiritual change required from the outward ordinance by which it is symbolized, so that the existence of the one in any case does not necessarily imply the existence of the other. Baptism is enjoined in the New Testament as a duty equally with faith in Christ, and is apparently connected with salvation; (Mark xvi. 16,) and yet a person, can be baptized without having experienced regeneration; (Acts viii. 13, 21-23) and also regeneration may be effected in a human soul, and baptism never follow, as is seen in the case of the converted thief. Luke xxiii. 42-43. The sign being mentioned in the passage before the spiritual change ought to create no difficulty, seeing the general teaching of the New Testament places the spiritual qualification first; and first it must ever be in importance and significance.

But a still stronger objection than that brought against the Exegesis I have given can be urged, and with much greater force and show of reason, against the *express* language of Inspiration;—since salvation is a much stronger and more comprehensive term than regeneration.

And yet the Apostle Peter does not hesitate to connect baptism with salvation in the most direct form. In referring to God's great forbearance in the days of Noah, while the ark was building, and to the rescue from the deluge of those in the ark, he says: "Wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water;" and then adds this important statement,—"The like figure whereunto, even baptism doth now save us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter iii. 20, 21.

What will Mr. R. now say? What method will he contrive to rescue the Apostle from so strange and heterodox, nay, dangerous a position, one that apparently makes baptism essential to salvation?

Shall we understand "baptism" in the above passage as the instrument or means by which salvation is obtained? But so regarding baptism would be equivalent to making it essential to salvation, the very conclusion to avoid which, Mr. R. seems to have constructed his Exegesis. But baptism here should not, in my judgment, be taken as the instrument or means of salvation; but as typifying or symbolizing the whole work of salvation as accomplished in the death and resurrection of our Lord, and also as wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit.

We have in the baptism of the New Testament a "likeness" or representation of Christ's death, and also of His resurrection, (Romans vi. 5) by which salvation is obtained through faith; and baptism also symbolizes, as we have seen, the great spiritual change required, whether that change be considered as a birth, or a resurrection. For it is "not, as the Apostle tell us, the putting away the filth of the flesh," the outward act of baptism that saves, but the great, inward spiritual change which it symbolizes, that secures salvation. He that believeth and is baptized, says our Lord, shall be saved; but he that believeth not (though baptized) shall be condemned.

So, then, in neither case, is it the birth, bath or baptism of water that regenerates the soul, or saves it, but what is pre-figured and symbolized in baptism—the death and resurrection of Christ, and the being born of the Holy Spirit. There is no need of confounding the sign with the thing signified, nor is there any necessity for rendering them apart; we should not be afraid to take the ordinances of the Gospel in their proper use and relation to the highest truths and events of God's kingdom, where our Lord and his Apostles have placed them.

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CRITO.