

On the occasion of my first election five men were invited to submit their names to the committee. Two declined to stand, so we three constituted the "short leet" and came up to the scratch. Sir Robert Burnett of Leys, Sir Charles Farquhar Shand, and myself forgathered in an adjoining room, and were drafted one by one to the dread chamber in the Imperial Hotel at Aberdeen where sat in conclave the Liberal hundred, or fifty, or thirty (I don't remember the number), and put through our facings. A certain amount of heckling took place, and then to my horror the terrible announcement was made that we must go in and address our judges. This was particularly alarming to me, for I had come quite unprepared, knew absolutely nothing about politics, and had no previous experience of public speaking except as a medical lecturer. But I felt that this was the turning-point of my career, and that the ways parted on the one hand to a dowdy brass plate in Brook Street, and on the other to the free and open life, with a possibly brilliant career on the green benches. So, emboldened by despair, I pulled myself together, shook up the grey matter of my brain, and proceeded with all the confidence at my command to pronounce a rambling and scrambling, but not ineffective, discourse constructed on sound Radical lines. I then withdrew and mentally shivered in an adjoining room until I was called back and informed that the choice of the electors had fallen upon me. I was not altogether surprised at this. One of my two competitors, Sir Charles Farquhar Shand, was able, experienced, and plausible, but they thought he was too old for the job; and the other, Sir Robert Burnett, had sharp angles in his mental attitude which jarred a little on his audience; and, best of all, some of my most influential tenants were there to give me a helping hand and urge my claims. Therefore, all inexperienced as I was, and diffident of my own powers, I was saddled with the real and serious responsibility of fighting the battle of my party at the general election, and of carrying the banner of Liberalism proudly on to victory as my predecessors had done. Luckily, I had a clear three weeks for preparation, and I set myself vigorously to work. In addition to the more ordinary subjects of party warfare, the election was to be fought mainly on two points—the annexation of the Transvaal,