

In former days young men of promise were saved much trouble and expense by the system of "rotten boroughs." It will be remembered that Gladstone got his first start as a nominee of the Duke of Newcastle, and although the system undoubtedly deserved its title, there was a little to be said on the other side. But the Reform made a clean sweep of these cobwebbed survivals of privilege and corruption, and the sooner the last of the fancy franchises follows them into the dust-heap the better. I always proudly remember having seconded my old friend Edmund Robertson, afterwards Lord Lochee, in a motion for abolition of the University seats many years ago, which we carried at an evening sitting, and the realisation of our hopes has now at last come into the near horizon of practical politics.

I have never ceased to wonder why some people, apparently endowed with every necessary quality, never can get into the House, whereas others apparently far more slenderly equipped with brains and the faculty of using them, simply push the door open on oiled hinges. I could mention, if it were convenient to do so, several people with money, interest, oratorical capacity, and the record of good service, hopelessly distanced by what I must call duffers. There is just a something, a personality, a touch of sympathy, a measure of personal charm which outweighs the more solid qualities of the other. We all know how quite plain women catch hold of us and grip us to them with hooks of steel—why, we have sometimes only the faintest notion.