

and the foolish and unnecessary Afghan War, waged to gratify some fantastic whim of Disraeli. And I fed largely on leaflets, on bygone speeches, and most of all on three admirable books, two of which were largely ephemeral, but the third is the most complete compendium of political history I know. Justin M'Carthy's admirable history of his own times had not then been published. My previous training and the passing of many examinations had familiarised me with the process of cramming, and the faculty of reproducing in fairly intelligible form the information I had acquired. So I proceeded to the battlefield with a certain amount of confidence, more especially as I knew that my opponent, Sir William Forbes, sterling good fellow as he was, trusted pretty much to his native shrewdness and bonhomie, and had not the mental minuteness necessary to get up a wide subject with which he was previously unfamiliar. "Politics," said Mr Pickwick on a memorable occasion, "is in itself a subject of no inconsiderable magnitude," and I am sure we both agreed with him. But although I don't suppose I was really the abler man of the two, I had more mental adaptability and learnt as I went along, and generally managed to hold my own with the hecklers, who asked my friend questions which would have seriously disconcerted me. And now came the practical question of expense. That blessed Corrupt Practices Act was then unknown, and the sums paid by candidates were practically unlimited. But my opponent and I were neither of us rich men, and in our wish to exercise reasonable economy we hit upon a plan for which I think we have never received enough credit as pioneers of Lord James's beneficent legislation. Formerly we were allowed to pay railway fares, to charter conveyances to any amount, and to hire an unlimited number of agents. In consultation between both sides we agreed to knock off these too heavy