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Mark Twain, "Stirring Times in Austria," 1898

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"Stirring Times in Austria" by Mark Twain

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I. THE GOVERNMENT IN THE FRYING-PAN

Here in Vienna in these closing days of 1897 one's blood gets no chance to stagnate. The atmosphere is brimful of political electricity. All conversation is political; every man is a battery, with brushes over-worn, and gives out blue sparks when you set him going on the common topic. Everybody has an opinion, and lets you have it frank and hot, and out of this multitude of counsel you get merely confusion and despair. For no one really understands this political situation, or can tell you what is going to be the outcome of it.

Things have happened here recently which would set any country but Austria on fire from end to end, and upset the government to a certainty; but no one feels confident that such results will follow here. Here, apparently, one must wait and see what will happen, then he will know, and not before; guessing is idle; guessing cannot help the matter. This is what the wise tell you; they all say it; they say it every day, and it is the sole detail upon which they all agree.

There is some approach to agreement upon another point: that there will be no revolution. Men say: "Look at our history: revolutions have not been in our line; and look at our political map: its construction is unfavorable to an organized uprising, and without unity what could a revolt accomplish? It is disunion which has held our empire together for centuries, and what it has done in the past it may continue to do now and in the future."

The most intelligible sketch I have encountered of this unintelligible arrangement of things was contributed to the *Traveler's Record* by Mr. Forrest Morgan, of Hartford, three years ago. He says:

The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy is the patchwork quilt, the Midway Plaisance, the national chain-gang of Europe; a state that is not a nation but a collection of nations, some with national memories and aspirations and others without, some occupying distinct provinces almost purely their own, and others mixed with alien races, but each with a different language, and each mostly holding the others foreigners as much as if the link of a common government did not exist. Only one of its races even now comprises so much as one-fourth of the whole, and not another so much as one-sixth; and each has remained for ages as unchanged in isolation, however mingled together in locality, as globules of oil in water. There is nothing else in the modern world that

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is nearly like it, though there have been plenty in past ages; it seems unreal and impossible even though we know it is true; it violates all our feeling as to what a country should be in order to have a right to exist; and it seems as though it was too ramshackle to go on holding together any length of time. Yet it has survived, much in its present shape, two centuries of storms that have swept perfectly unified countries from existence and others that have brought it to the verge of ruin, has survived formidable European coalitions to dismember it, and has steadily gained force after each; forever changing in its exact make-up, losing in the West but gaining in the East, the changes leave the structure as firm as ever, like the dropping off and adding on of logs in a raft, its mechanical union of pieces showing all the vitality of genuine national life.

That seems to confirm and justify the prevalent Austrian faith that in this confusion of unrelated and irreconcilable elements, this condition of incurable disunion, there is strength -- for the government. Nearly every day some one explains to me that a revolution would not succeed here. "It couldn't, you know. Broadly speaking, all the nations in the empire hate the government -- but they all hate each other, too, and with devoted and enthusiastic bitterness; no two of them can combine; the nation that rises must rise alone; then the others would joyfully join the government against her, and she would have just a fly's chance against a combination of spiders. This government is entirely independent. It can go its own road, and do as it pleases; it has nothing to fear. In countries like England and America, where there is one tongue and the public interests are common, the government must take account of public opinion; but in Austria-Hungary there are nineteen public opinions -- one for each state. No -- two or three for each state, since there are two or three nationalities in each. A government cannot satisfy all these public opinions; it can only go through the motions of trying. This government does that. It goes through the motions, and they do not succeed; but that does not worry the government much."

The next man will give you some further information. "The government has a policy -- a wise one -- and sticks steadily to it. This policy is -- *tranquillity*: keep this hive of excitable nations as quiet as possible; encourage them to amuse themselves with things less inflammatory than politics. To this end it furnishes them an abundance of Catholic priests to teach them to be docile and obedient, and to be diligent in acquiring ignorance about things here below, and knowledge about the kingdom of heaven, to whose historic delights they are going to add the charm of their society by and by; and further -- to this same end -- it cools off the newspapers every morning at five o'clock, whenever warm events are happening." There is a censor of the press, and apparently he is always on duty and hard at work. A copy of each morning paper is brought to him at five o'clock. His official wagons wait at the doors of the newspaper offices and scud to him with the first copies that come from the press. His company of assistants read every line in these papers, and mark everything which seems to have a dangerous look; then he passes final judgement upon these markings. Two things conspire to give to the results a capricious and unbalanced look: his assistants have diversified notions as to what is dangerous and

what isn't; he can't get time to examine their criticisms in much detail; and so sometimes the very same matter which is suppressed in one paper fails to be damned in another one, and gets published in full feather and unmodified. Then the paper in which it was suppressed blandly copies the forbidden matter into its evening edition -- provokingly giving credit and detailing all the circumstances in courteous and inoffensive language -- and of course the censor cannot say a word.

Sometimes the censor sucks all the blood out of a newspaper and leaves it colorless and inane; sometimes he leaves it undisturbed, and lets it talk out its opinions with a frankness and vigor hardly to be surpassed, I think, in the journals of any country. Apparently the censor sometimes revises his verdicts upon second thought, for several times lately he has suppressed journals after their issue and partial distribution. The distributed copies are then sent for by the censor and destroyed. I have two of these, but at the time they were sent for I could not remember what I had done with them.

If the censor did his work before the morning edition was printed, he would be less of an inconvenience than he is; but of course the papers cannot wait many minutes after five o'clock to get his

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verdict; they might as well go out of business as do that; so they print, and take the chances. Then, if they get caught by a suppression, they must strike out the condemned matter and print the edition over again. That delays the issue several hours, and is expensive besides. The government gets the suppressed edition for nothing. If it bought it, that would be joyful, and would give great satisfaction. Also, the edition would be larger. Some of the papers do not replace the condemned paragraphs with other matter; they merely snatch them out and leave blanks behind -- mourning blanks, marked "*Confiscated.*"

The government discourages the dissemination of newspaper information in other ways. For instance, it does not allow newspapers to be sold on the streets; therefore the newsboy is unknown in Vienna. And there is a stamp duty of nearly a cent upon each copy of a newspaper's issue. Every American paper that reaches me has a stamp upon it, which has been pasted there in the post-office or down-stairs in the hotel office; but no matter who put it there, I have to pay for it, and that is the main thing. Sometimes friends send me so many papers that it takes all I can earn that week to keep this government going.

I must take passing notice of another point in the government's measures for maintaining tranquillity. Everybody says it does not like to see any individual attain to commanding influence in the country, since such a man can become a disturber and an inconvenience. "We have as much talent as the other nations," says the citizen, resignedly, and without bitterness, "but for the sake of the general good of the country we are discouraged from making it overconspicuous; and not only discouraged, but tactfully and skillfully

prevented from doing it, if we show too much persistence. Consequently we have no renowned men; in centuries we have seldom produced one -- that is, seldom allowed one to produce himself. We can say to-day what no other nation of first importance in the family of Christian civilizations can say: that there exists no Austrian who has made an enduring name for himself which is familiar all around the globe."

Another helper toward tranquillity is the army. It is as pervasive as the atmosphere. It is everywhere. All the mentioned creators, promoters, and preservers of the public tranquillity do their several shares in the quieting work. They make a restful and comfortable serenity and reposefulness. This is disturbed sometimes for a little while: a mob assembles to protest against something; it gets noisy -- noisier -- still noisier -- finally too noisy; then the persuasive soldiery come charging down upon it, and in a few minutes all is quiet again, and there is no mob.

There is a Constitution and there is a Parliament. The House draws its membership of 425 deputies from the nineteen or twenty states heretofore mentioned. These men represent peoples who speak eleven languages. That means eleven distinct varieties of jealousies, hostilities, and warring interests. This could be expected to furnish forth a parliament of a pretty inharmonious sort, and make legislation difficult at times -- and it does that. The parliament is split up into many parties -- the Clericals, the Progressists, the German Nationalists, the Young Czechs, the Social Democrats, the Christian Socialists, and some others -- and it is difficult to get up working combinations among them. They prefer to fight apart sometimes.

The recent troubles have grown out of Count Badeni's necessities. He could not carry on his government without a majority vote in the House at his back, and in order to secure it he had to make a trade of some sort. He made it with the Czechs -- the Bohemians. The terms were not easy for him: he must pass a bill making the Czech tongue the official language in Bohemia in place of the German. This created a storm. All the Germans in Austria were incensed. In numbers they form but a fourth part of the empire's population, but they urge that the country's public business should be conducted in one common tongue, and that tongue a world language -- which German is.

However, Badeni secured his majority. The German element in parliament was apparently become helpless. The Czech deputies were exultant.

Then the music began. Badeni's voyage, instead of being smooth, was disappointingly rough from the start. The government must get the *Ausgleich* through. It must not fail. Badeni's majority was ready to carry it through; but

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the minority was determined to obstruct it and delay it until the obnoxious Czech-language measure should be shelved.

The *Ausgleich* is an Adjustment, Arrangement, Settlement, which holds Austria and Hungary together. It dates from 1867, and has to be renewed every ten years. It establishes the share which Hungary must pay toward the expenses of the imperial government. Hungary is a kingdom (the Emperor of Austria is its King), and has its own parliament and governmental machinery. But it has no foreign office, and it has no army - - at least its army is a part of the imperial army, is paid out of the imperial treasury, and is under the control of the imperial war office.

The ten-year rearrangement was due a year ago, but failed to connect. At least completely. A year's compromise was arranged. A new arrangement must be effected before the last day of this year. Otherwise the two countries become separate entities. The Emperor would still be King of Hungary -- that is, King of an independent foreign country. There would be Hungarian custom-houses on the Austrian frontier, and there would be a Hungarian army and a Hungarian foreign office. Both countries would be weakened by this, both would suffer damage.

The Opposition in the House, although in the minority, had a good weapon to fight with in the pending *Ausgleich*. If it could delay the *Ausgleich* a few weeks, the government would doubtless have to withdraw the hated language bill or lose Hungary.

The Opposition began its fight. Its arms were the Rules of the House. It was soon manifest that by applying these Rules ingeniously it could make the majority helpless, and keep it so as long as it pleased. It could shut off business every now and then with a motion to adjourn. It could require the ayes and noes on the motion, and use up thirty minutes on that detail. It could call for the reading and verification of the minutes of the preceding meeting, and use up half a day in that way. It could require that several of its members be entered upon the list of permitted speakers previously to the opening of a sitting; and as there is no time limit, further delays could thus be accomplished.

These were all lawful weapons, and the men of the Opposition (technically called the Left) were within their rights in using them. They used them to such dire purpose that all parliamentary business was paralyzed. The Right (the government side) could accomplish nothing. Then it had a saving idea. This idea was a curious one. It was to have the President and the Vice-Presidents of the parliament trample the Rules under foot upon occasion!

This, for a profoundly embittered minority constructed out of fire and gun-cotton! It was time for idle strangers to go and ask leave to look down out of a gallery and see what would be the result of it.

II. A MEMORABLE SITTING

And now took place that memorable sitting of the House which broke two records. It lasted the best part of two days and a night, surpassing by half an hour the longest sitting known to the world's previous parliamentary history, and breaking the long-speech record

with Dr. Lecher's twelve-hour effort, the longest flow of unbroken talk that ever came out of one mouth since the world began.

At 8.45, on the evening of the 28th of October, when the House had been sitting a few minutes short of ten hours, Dr. Lecher was granted the floor. It was a good place for theatrical effects. I think that no other Senate House is so shapely as this one, or so richly and showily decorated. Its plan is that of an opera-house. Up toward the straight side of it -- the stage side -- rise a couple of terraces of desks for the ministry, and the official clerks or secretaries -- terraces thirty feet long, and each supporting about half a dozen desks with spaces between them. Above these is the President's terrace, against the wall. Along it are distributed the proper accommodations for the presiding officer and his assistants. The wall is of richly colored marble highly polished, its paneled sweep relieved by fluted columns and pilasters of distinguished grace and dignity, which glow softly and frostily in the electric light. Around the spacious half-circle of the floor bends the great two-storied curve of the boxes, its frontage elaborately ornamented and sumptuously gilded. On the floor of the House the four hundred and twenty-five desks radiate fanwise from the President's tribune.

The galleries are crowded on this par-

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ticular evening, for word has gone about that the *Ausgleich* is before the House; that the President, Ritter von Abrahamowicz, has been throttling the Rules; that the Opposition are in an inflammable state in consequence, and that the night session is likely to be of an exciting sort.

The gallery guests are fashionably dressed, and the finery of the women makes a bright and pretty show under the strong electric light. But down on the floor there is no costumery.

The deputies are dressed in day clothes; some of the clothes neat and trim, others not; there may be three members in evening dress, but not more. There are several Catholic priests in their long black gowns, and with crucifixes hanging from their necks. No member wears his hat. One may see by these details that the aspects are not those of an evening sitting of an English House of Commons, but rather those of a sitting of our House of Representatives.

In his high place sits the President, Abrahamowicz, object of the Opposition's limitless hatred. He is sunk back in the depths of his arm-chair, and has his chin down. He brings the ends of his spread fingers together in front of his breast, and reflectively taps them together, with the air of one who would like to begin business, but must wait, and be as patient as he can. It makes you think of Richelieu. Now and then he swings his head up to the left or to the right and answers something which some one has bent down to say to him. Then he taps his fingers again. He looks tired, and maybe a trifle harassed. He is a

gray-haired, long, slender man, with a colorless long face, which, in repose, suggests a death-mask; but when not in repose is tossed and rippled by a turbulent smile which washes this way and that, and is not easy to keep up with -- a pious smile, a holy smile, a saintly smile, a deprecating smile, a beseeching and supplicating smile; and when it is at work the large mouth opens and the flexible lips crumple, and unfold, and crumple again, and move around in a genial and persuasive and angelic way, and expose large glimpses of the teeth; and that interrupts the sacredness of the smile and gives it momentarily a mixed worldly and political and satanic cast. It is a most interesting face to watch. And then the long hands and the body -- they furnish great and frequent help to the face in the business of adding to the force of the statesman's words.

To change the tense. At the time of which I have just been speaking the crowds in the galleries were gazing at the stage and the pit with rapt interest and expectancy. One half of the great fan of desks was in effect empty, vacant; in the other half several hundred members were bunched and jammed together as solidly as the bristles in a brush; and they also were waiting and expecting. Presently the Chair delivered this utterance:

"Dr. Lecher has the floor."

Then burst out such another wild and frantic and deafening clamor as has not been heard on this planet since the last time the Comanches surprised a white settlement at midnight. Yells from the Left, counter-yells from the Right, explosions of yells from all sides at once, and all the air sawed and pawed and clawed and cloven by a writhing confusion of gesturing arms and hands. Out of the midst of this thunder and turmoil and tempest rose Dr. Lecher, serene and collected, and the providential length of him enabled his head to show out above it. He began his twelve-hour speech. At any rate, his lips could be seen to move, and that was evidence. On high sat the President imploring order, with his long hands put together as in prayer, and his lips visibly but not hearably speaking. At intervals he grasped his bell and swung it up and down with vigor, adding its keen clamor to the storm weltering there below.

Dr. Lecher went on with his pantomime speech, contented, untroubled. Here and there and now and then powerful voices burst above the din, and delivered an ejaculation that was heard. Then the din ceased for a moment or two, and gave opportunity to hear what the Chair might answer; then the noise broke out again. Apparently the President was being charged with all sorts of illegal exercises of power in the interest of the Right (the government side): among these, with arbitrarily closing an Order of Business before it was finished; with an unfair distribution of the right to the floor; with refusal of the floor, upon quibble and protest, to members entitled to it; with stopping a speaker's speech upon quibble and protest; and with other transgressions of the Rules of the House. One of the interrupters who made himself heard

was a young fellow of slight build and neat dress, who stood a little apart from the solid crowd and leaned negligently, with folded arms and feet crossed, against a desk. Trim and handsome, strong face and thin features; black hair roughed up; parsimonious mustache; resonant great voice, of good tone and pitch. It is Wolf, capable and hospitable with sword and pistol, fighter of the recent duel with Count Badeni, the head of the government. He shot Badeni through the arm, and then walked over in the politest way and inspected his game, shook hands, expressed regret, and all that. Out of him came early this thundering peal, audible above the storm:

"I demand the floor. I wish to offer a motion."

In the sudden lull which followed, the President answered, "Dr. Lecher has the floor."

Wolf. "I move the close of the sitting!"

P. "Representative Lecher has the floor." [Stormy outburst from the Left -- that is, the Opposition.]

Wolf. I demand the floor for the introduction of a formal motion. [Pause.] Mr. President, are you going to grant it, or not? [Crash of approval from the Left.] I will keep on demanding the floor till I get it.

P. "I call Representative Wolf to order. Dr. Lecher has the floor."

Wolf. "Mr. President, are you going to observe the Rules of this House?" [Tempest of applause and confused ejaculations from the Left -- a boom and roar which long endured, and stopped all business for the time being.]

Dr. von Pessler. "By the Rules motions are in order, and the Chair *must* put them to vote."

For answer the President (who is a Pole -- I make this remark in passing) began to jangle his bell with energy at the moment that that wild pandemonium of voices burst out again.

Wolf (hearable above the storm). "Mr. President, I demand the floor. We intend to find out, here and now, which is the hardest, *a Pole's skull or a German's!*"

This brought out a perfect cyclone of satisfaction from the Left. In the midst of it some one again moved an adjournment. The President blandly answered that Dr. Lecher had the floor. Which was true; and he was speaking, too, calmly, earnestly, and argumentatively; and the official stenographers had left their places and were at his elbows taking down his words, he leaning and orating into their ears -- a most curious and interesting scene.

Dr. von Pessler (to the Chair). "Do not drive us to extremities!"

The tempest burst out again; yells of approval from the Left, catcalls, and ironical laughter from the Right. At this point a new and most effective noise-maker was pressed into service. Each desk has an extension, consisting of a removable board eighteen inches long, six wide, and a half-inch thick. A member pulled one of these out and began to belabor the top of his desk with it. Instantly other members followed suit, and perhaps you can imagine the result. Of all conceivable rackets it is the most ear-splitting, intolerable, and altogether fiendish.

The persecuted President leaned back in his chair, closed his eyes, clasped his hands in his lap, and a look of pathetic resignation crept over his long face. It is the way a country schoolmaster used to look in days long past when he had refused his school a holiday and it had risen against him in ill-mannered riot and violence and insurrection. Twice a motion to adjourn had been offered a motion always in order in other Houses, and doubtless so in this one also. The President had refused to put these motions. By consequence, he was not in a pleasant place now, and was having a right hard time. Votes upon motions, whether carried or defeated, could make endless delay, and postpone the *Ausgleich* to next century.

In the midst of these sorrowful circumstances and this hurricane of yells and screams and satanic clatter of desk-boards, Representative Dr. Kronawetter unfeelingly reminds the Chair that a motion has been offered, and adds: "Say yes, or no! What do you sit there for, and give no answer?"

P. "After I have given a speaker the floor, I cannot give it to another. After Dr. Lecher is through, I will put your motion." [Storm of indignation from the Left.]

Wolf (to the Chair). "Thunder and lightning! look at the Rule governing the case!"

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Kronawetter. "I move the close of the sitting! And I demand the ayes and noes!"

Dr. Lecher. "Mr. President, have I the floor?"

P. "You have the floor."

Wolf (to the Chair, in a stentorian voice which cleaves its way through the storm). "It is by such brutalities as these that you drive us to extremities! Are you waiting till some one shall throw into your face the word that shall describe what you are bringing about?*" [Tempest of insulted fury from the Right.] *Is that what you are waiting for, old Grayhead?* [Long-continued clatter of desk-boards from the Left, with shouts of "The vote! the vote!" An ironical shout from the Right, "Wolf is boss!"]

Wolf keeps on demanding the floor for his motion. At length --

P. "I call Representative Wolf to order! Your conduct is unheard-of, sir! You forget that you are in a parliament; you must remember where you are, sir." [Applause from the Right. Dr. Lecher is still peacefully speaking, the stenographers listening at his lips.]

Wolf (banging on his desk with his desk-board). "I demand the floor for my motion! I won't stand this trampling of the Rules under foot -- no, not if I die for it! I will never yield! You have got to stop me by force. Have I the floor?"

P. "Representative Wolf, what kind of behavior is this? I call you to order again. You should have some regard for your dignity."

Dr. Lecher speaks on. Wolf turns upon him with an offensive innuendo.

Dr. Lecher. "Mr. Wolf, I beg you to refrain from that sort of suggestions." [Storm of hand-clapping from the Right.]

This was applause from the enemy, for Lecher himself, like Wolf, was an Obstructionist.

Wolf growls to Lecher: "You can scribble that applause in your album!"

P. "Once more I call Representative Wolf to order! Do not forget that you are a Representative, sir!"

Wolf (slam-banging with his desk-board). "I will force this matter! Are you going to grant me the floor, or not?"

And still the sergeant-at-arms did not appear. It was because there wasn't any. It is a curious thing, but the Chair has no effectual means of compelling order.

After some more interruptions:

Wolf (banging with his board). "I demand the floor. I will not yield!"

P. "I have no recourse against Representative Wolf. In the presence of behavior like this it is to be regretted that such is the case." [A shout from the Right, "Throw him out!"]

It is true, he had no effective recourse. He had an official called an "Ordner," whose help he could invoke in desperate cases, but apparently the Ordner is only a persuader, not a compeller. Apparently he is a sergeant-at-arms who is not loaded; a good enough gun to look at, but not valuable for business.

For another twenty or thirty minutes Wolf went on banging with his board and demanding his rights; then at last the weary President threatened to summon the dread order-maker. But both his manner and his words were reluctant. Evidently it grieved him to have to resort to this dire extremity. He said to Wolf, "If this goes on, I shall feel obliged to summon the Ordner, and beg him to restore order in the House."

Wolf. "I'd like to see you do it! Suppose you fetch in a few policemen, too! [Great tumult.] Are you going to put my motion to adjourn, or not?"

Dr. Lecher continues his speech. Wolf accompanies him with his board-clatter.

The President despatches the Ordner, Dr. Lang (himself a deputy), on his order-restoring mission. Wolf, with his board uplifted for defense, confronts the Ordner with a remark which Boss Tweed might have translated into "Now let's see what you are going to do about it!" [Noise and tumult all over the House.]

Wolf stands upon his rights, and says he will maintain them till he is killed in his tracks. Then he resumes his banging, the President jangles his bell and begs for order, and the rest of the House augments the racket the best it can.

Wolf. "I require an adjournment, because I find myself personally threatened. [Laughter from the Right.] Not that I fear for myself; I am only anxious about what will happen to the man who touches me."

The Ordner. "I am not going to fight with you."

Nothing came of the efforts of the angel of peace, and he presently melted out of the scene and disappeared. Wolf went on with his noise and with his demands

*That is revolution.--M.T.

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that he be granted the floor, resting his board at intervals to discharge criticisms and epithets at the Chair. Once he reminded the Chairman of his violated promise to grant him (Wolf) the floor, and said, "Whence I came, we call promise-breakers rascals!" And he advised the Chairman to take his conscience to bed with him and use it as a pillow. Another time he said that the Chair was making itself ridiculous before all Europe. In fact, some of Wolf's language was almost unparliamentary. By and by he struck the idea of beating out a tune with his board. Later he decided to stop asking for the floor, and to confer it upon himself. And so he and Dr. Lecher now spoke at the same time, and mingled their speeches with the other noises, and nobody heard either of them. Wolf rested himself now and then from speech-making by reading, in his clarion voice, from a pamphlet.

I will explain that Dr. Lecher was not making a twelve-hour speech for pastime, but for an important purpose. It was the government's intention to push the *Ausgleich* through its preliminary stages in this one sitting (for which it was the Order of the Day), and then by vote refer it to a select committee. It was the Majority's scheme as charged by the Opposition to drown debate upon the bill by pure noise drown it out and stop it. The

debate being thus ended, the vote upon the reference would follow with victory for the government. But into the government's calculations had

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not entered the possibility of a single-barreled speech which should occupy the entire time-limit of the sitting, and also get itself delivered in spite of all the noise. Goliath was not expecting David. But David was there; and during twelve hours he tranquilly pulled statistical, historical, and argumentative pebbles out of his scrip and slung them at the giant; and when he was done he was victor, and the day was saved.

In the English House an obstructionist has held the floor with Bible- readings and other outside matters; but Dr. Lecher could not have that restful and recuperative privilege -- he must confine himself strictly to the subject before the House. More than once, when the President could not hear him because of the general tumult, he sent persons to listen and report as to whether the orator was speaking to the subject or not.

The subject was a peculiarly difficult one, and it would have troubled any other deputy to stick to it three hours without exhausting his ammunition, because it required a vast and intimate knowledge -- detailed and particularized knowledge -- of the commercial, railroading, financial, and international banking relations existing between two great sovereignties, Hungary and the Empire. But Dr. Lecher is President of the Board of Trade of his city of Brunn, and was master of the situation. His speech was not formally prepared. He had a few notes jotted down for his guidance; he had his facts in his head; his heart was in his work; and for twelve hours he stood there, undisturbed by the clamor around him, and with grace and ease and confidence poured out the riches of his mind, in closely reasoned arguments, clothed in eloquent and faultless phrasing.

He is a young man of thirty-seven. He is tall and well proportioned, and has cultivated and fortified his muscle by mountain-climbing. If he were a little handsomer he would sufficiently reproduce for me the Chauncey Depew of the great New England dinner nights of some years ago; he has Depew's charm of manner and graces of language and delivery.

There was but one way for Dr. Lecher to hold the floor -- he must stay on his legs. If he should sit down to rest a moment, the floor would be taken from him by the enemy in the Chair. When he had been talking three or four hours he himself proposed an adjournment, in order that he might get some rest from his wearing labors; but he limited his motion with the condition that if it was lost he should be allowed to continue his speech, and if it carried he should have the floor at the next sitting. Wolf was now appeased, and withdrew his own thousand-times offered motion, and Dr. Lecher's was voted upon and lost. So he went on speaking.

By one o'clock in the morning, excitement and noise-making had tired out nearly everybody but the orator. Gradually the seats of the Right underwent depopulation; the

occupants had slipped out to the refreshment-rooms to eat and drink, or to the corridors to chat. Some one remarked that there was no longer a quorum present, and moved a call of the House. The Chair (Vice-President Dr. Kramarz) refused to put it to a vote. There was a small dispute over the legality of this ruling, but the Chair held its ground.

The Left remained on the battle-field to support their champion. He went steadily on with his speech; and always it was strong, virile, felicitous, and to the point. He was earning applause, and this enabled his party to turn that fact to account. Now and then they applauded him a couple of minutes on a stretch, and during that time he could stop speaking

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and rest his voice without having the floor taken from him.

At a quarter to two a member of the Left demanded that Dr. Lecher be allowed a recess for rest, and said that the Chairman was "heartless." Dr. Lecher himself asked for ten minutes. The Chair allowed him five. Before the time had run out Dr. Lecher was on his feet again.

Wolf burst out again with a motion to adjourn. Refused by the Chair. Wolf said the whole parliament wasn't worth a pinch of powder. The Chair retorted that that was true in a case where a single member was able to make all parliamentary business impossible. Dr. Lecher continued his speech.

The members of the Majority went out by detachments from time to time and took naps upon sofas in the reception-rooms; and also refreshed themselves with food and drink in quantities nearly unbelievable -- but the Minority stayed loyally by their champion. Some distinguished deputies of the Majority stayed by him, too, compelled thereto by admiration of his great performance. When a man has been speaking eight hours, is it conceivable that he can still be interesting, still fascinating? When Dr. Lecher had been speaking eight hours he was still compactly surrounded by friends who would not leave him and by foes (of all parties) who *could* not; and all hung enchanted and wondering upon his words, and all testified their admiration with constant and cordial outbursts of applause. Surely this was a triumph without precedent in history.

During the twelve-hour effort friends brought to the orator three glasses of wine, four cups of coffee, and one glass of beer -- a most stingy reinforcement of his wasting tissues, but the hostile Chair would permit no addition to it. But no matter, the Chair could not beat that man. He was a garrison holding a fort, and was not to be starved out.

When he had been speaking eight hours his pulse was seventy-two; when he had spoken twelve, it was one hundred.

He finished his long speech in these terms, as nearly as a permissibly free translation can convey them:

"I will now hasten to close my examination of the subject. I conceived that

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we of the Left have made it clear to the honorable gentlemen of the other side of the House that we are stirred by no intemperate enthusiasm for this measure in its present shape....

"What we require, and shall fight for with all lawful weapons, is a formal, comprehensive, and definitive solution and settlement of these vexed matters. We desire the restoration of the earlier condition of things; the cancellation of all this incapable government's pernicious trades with Hungary; and then release from the sorry burden of the Badeni ministry!

"I voice the hope -- I know not if it will be fulfilled -- I voice the deep and sincere and patriotic hope that the committee into whose hands this bill will eventually be committed will take its stand upon high ground, and will return the *Ausgleich-Provisorium* to this House in a form which shall make it the protector and promoter alike of the great interests involved and of the honor of our fatherland." After a pause, turning toward the government benches: "But in any case, gentlemen of the Majority, make sure of this: henceforth, as before, you will find us at our post. The Germans of Austria will neither surrender nor die!"

Then burst a storm of applause which rose and fell, rose and fell, burst out again and again and again, explosion after explosion, hurricane after hurricane, with no apparent promise of ever coming to an end; and meantime the whole Left was surging and weltering about the champion, all bent upon wringing his hand and congratulating him and glorifying him.

Finally he got away, and went home and ate five loaves and twelve baskets of fishes, read the morning papers, slept three hours, took a short drive, then returned to the House and sat out the rest of the thirty-three-hour session.

To merely *stand up* in one spot twelve hours on a stretch is a feat which very few men could achieve; to add to the task the utterance of a hundred thousand words would be beyond the possibilities of the most of those few; to superimpose the requirement that the words should be put into the form of a compact, coherent, and symmetrical oration would probably rule out the rest of the few, bar Dr. Lecher.

III. CURIOUS PARLIAMENTARY ETIQUETTE

In consequence of Dr. Lecher's twelve-hour speech and the other obstructions furnished by the Minority, the famous thirty-three-hour sitting of the House accomplished nothing. The government side had made a supreme effort, assisting itself with all the helps at hand, both lawful and unlawful, yet had failed to get the *Ausgleich* into the hands of a committee. This was a severe defeat. The Right was mortified, the Left jubilant.

Parliament was adjourned for a week to let the members cool off, perhaps a sacrifice of precious time, for but two months remained in which to carry the all-important *Ausgleich* to a consummation.

If I have reported the behavior of the House intelligibly, the reader has been surprised at it, and has wondered whence these lawmakers come and what they are made of; and he has probably supposed that the conduct exhibited at the Long Sitting was far out of the common, and due to special excitement and irritation. As to the make-up of the House, it is this: the deputies come from all the walks of life and from all the grades of society. There are princes, counts, barons, priests, peasants, mechanics, laborers, lawyers, judges, physicians, professors, merchants, bankers, shopkeepers. They are religious men, they are earnest, sincere, devoted, and they hate the Jews. The title of Doctor is so common in the House that one may almost say that the deputy who does not bear it is by that reason conspicuous. I am assured that it is not a self-granted title, and not an honorary one, but an *earned* one; that in Austria it is very seldom conferred as a mere compliment; that in Austria the degrees of Doctor of Music, Doctor of Philosophy, and so on, are not conferred by the seats of learning; and so, when an Austrian is called Doctor it means that he is either a lawyer or a physician, and that he is not a self-educated man, but is college-bred, and has been diplomaed for merit.

That answers the question of the constitution of the House. Now as to the House's curious manners. The manners exhibited by this convention of Doctors were not at that time being tried as a wholly new experiment. I will go back to a previous sitting in order to show

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that the deputies had already had some practice.

There had been an incident. The dignity of the House had been wounded by improprieties indulged in in its presence by a couple of the members. This matter was placed in the hands of a committee to determine where the guilt lay, and the degree of it, and also to suggest the punishment. The chairman of the committee brought in his report. By this it appeared that, in the course of a speech, Deputy Schrammel said that religion had no proper place in the public schools -- it was a private matter. Whereupon Deputy Gregorig shouted, "How about free love!"

To this, Deputy Iro flung out this retort: "Soda-water at the Wimberger!"

This appeared to deeply offend Deputy Gregorig, who shouted back at Iro, "You cowardly blatherskite, say that again!"

The committee had sat three hours. Gregorig had apologized; Iro had explained. Iro explained that he didn't say anything about soda-water at the Wimberger. He explained in writing, and was very explicit: "I declare *upon my word of honor* that I did not say the words attributed to me."

Unhappily for his word of honor, it was proved by the official stenographers and by the testimony of several deputies that he *did* say them.

The committee did not officially know why the apparently inconsequential reference to soda-water at the Wimberger should move Deputy Gregorig to call the utterer of it a cowardly blatherskite; still, after proper deliberation, it was of the opinion that the House ought to formally censure the whole business. This verdict seems to have been regarded as sharply severe. I think so because Deputy Dr. Lueger, Bürgermeister of Vienna, felt it a duty to soften the blow to his friend Gregorig by showing that the soda-water remark was not so innocuous as it might look; that indeed Gregorig's tough retort was justifiable -- and he proceeded to explain why. He read a number of scandalous post-cards which he intimated had proceeded from Iro, as indicated by the handwriting, though they were anonymous. Some of them were posted to Gregorig at his place of business, and could have been read by all his subordinates; the others were posted to *Gregorig's wife*. Lueger did not say but everybody knew that the cards referred to a matter of town gossip which made Mr. Gregorig a chief actor in a tavern scene where siphon-squirting played a prominent and humorous part, and wherein women had a share.

There were several of the cards; more than several, in fact; no fewer than five were sent in one day. Dr. Lueger read some of them, and described others. Some of them had pictures on them; one a picture of a hog with a monstrous snout, and beside it a squirting soda-siphon; below it some sarcastic doggerel.

Gregorig deals in shirts, cravats, etc. One of the cards bore these words: "Much respected Deputy and collar-sewer -- or *stealer*."

Another: "Hurrah for the Christian-Social work among the women- assemblages! Hurrah for the soda-squirter!" Comment by Dr. Lueger: "I cannot venture to read the rest of that one, nor the signature, either."

Another: "Would you mind telling me if . . ."

Comment by Dr. Lueger: "The rest of it is not properly readable."

To Deputy Gregorig's wife: "Much respected Madam Gregorig, The undersigned desires an invitation to the next soda-squirt." Comment by Dr. Lueger: "Neither the rest of the card nor the signature can I venture to read to the House, so vulgar are they."

The purpose of this card to expose Gregorig to his family was repeated in others of these anonymous missives.

The House, by vote, censured the two improper deputies.

This may have had a modifying effect upon the phraseology of the membership for a while, and upon its general exuberance also, but it was not for long. As has been seen, it had become lively once more on the night of the Long Sitting. At the next sitting after the long one there was certainly no lack of liveliness. The President was persistently ignoring the Rules of the House in the interest of the government side, and the Minority were in an unappeasable fury about it. The ceaseless din and uproar, the shouting and stamping and desk-banging, were deafening, but through it all burst voices now and then that made themselves heard. Some of the remarks were of a very candid sort, and I believe that if they had been uttered in our House of Representatives they would have attract-

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ed attention. I will insert some samples here. Not in their order, but selected on their merits:

Dr. Mayreder (to the President). "You have lied! You conceded the floor to me; make it good, or you have lied!"

Mr. Glöckner (to the President). "Leave! Get out!"

Wolf (indicating the President). "There sits a man to whom a certain title belongs!"

Unto *Wolf*, who is continuously reading, in a powerful voice, from a newspaper, arrive these personal remarks from the Majority:

"Oh, shut your mouth!" "Put him out!" "Out with him!" *Wolf* stops reading a moment to shout at *Dr. Lueger*, who has the floor, but cannot get a hearing, "Please, Betrayer of the People, begin!"

Dr. Lueger. "Meine Herren" ["Oho!" and groans.]

Wolf. "That's the holy light of the Christian Socialists!"

Mr. Kletzenbauer (Christian Socialist). "Dam-nation! are you ever going to quiet down?"

Wolf discharges a galling remark at *Mr. Wohlmeyer*.

Wohlmeyer (responding). "You Jew, you!"

There is a momentous lull, and *Dr. Lueger* begins his speech. Graceful, handsome man, with winning manners and attractive bearing, a bright and easy speaker, and is said to

know how to trim his political sails to catch any favoring wind that blows. He manages to say a few words, then the tempest overwhelms him again.

Wolf stops reading his paper a moment to say a drastic thing about Lueger and his Christian-Social pieties, which sets the C. S.'s in a sort of frenzy.

Mr. Vielohlawek. "You leave the Christian Socialists alone, you word-of-honor-breaker! Obstruct all you want to, but you leave them alone! You've no business in this House; you belong in a gin-mill!"

Mr. Prochazka. "In a lunatic asylum, you mean!"

Vielohlawek. "It's a pity that such a man should be leader of the Germans; he disgraces the German name!"

Dr. Scheicher. "It's a shame that the like of him should insult us."

Strohbach (to Wolf). "Contemptible cub! we will bounce thee out of this! [It is inferable that the "thee" is not intended to indicate affection this time, but to reinforce and emphasize Mr. Strohbach's scorn.]

Dr. Scheicher. "His insults are of no consequence. He wants his ears boxed."

Dr. Lueger (to Wolf). You'd better worry a trifle over your Iro's word of honor. You are behaving like a street arab.

Dr. Scheicher. It's infamous!

Dr. Lueger. And *these* shameless creatures are the leaders of the German People's Party!"

Meantime Wolf goes whooping along with his newspaper-readings in great contentment.

Dr. Pattai. "Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! You haven't the floor!"

Strohbach. "The miserable cub!"

Dr. Lueger (to Wolf, raising his voice strenuously above the storm). "You are a wholly honorless street brat!" [A voice, "Fire the rapscallion out!" But Wolf's soul goes marching noisily on, just the same.]

Schönerer (vast and muscular, and endowed with the most powerful voice in the Reichsrath; comes plowing down through the standing crowds, red, and choking with anger; halts before Deputy Wohlmeyer, grabs a rule and smashes it with a blow upon a desk, threatens Wohlmeyer's face with his fist, and bellows out some personalities, and a promise). "Only you wait -- we'll teach you!" [A whirlwind of offensive retorts assails him from the band of meek and humble Christian Socialists compacted around their

leader, that distinguished religious expert, Dr. Lueger, Bürgermeister of Vienna. Our breath comes in excited gasps now, and we are full of hope. We imagine that we are back fifty years ago in the Arkansas Legislature, and we think we know what is going to happen, and are glad we came, and glad we are up in the gallery, out of the way, where we can see the whole thing and yet not have to supply any of the material for the inquest. However, as it turns out, our confidence is abused, our hopes are misplaced.]

Dr. Pattai (wildly excited). "You quiet down, or we shall turn ourselves loose! There will be a cuffing of ears!"

Prochazka (in a fury). "No -- *not* ear-boxing, but genuine *blows!*"

Vielohlawek. "I would rather take my hat off to a Jew than to Wolf!"

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Strohbach (to Wolf). "Jew-flunky! Here we have been fighting the Jews for ten years, and now you are helping them to power again. How much do you get for it?"

Holansky. "What he wants is a strait-jacket!"

Wolf continues his readings. It is a market report now.

Remark flung across the House to Schönerer: "*Die Grossmutter auf dem Misthaufen erzeugt worden!*"

It will be judicious not to translate that. Its flavor is pretty high, in any case, but it becomes particularly gamey when you remember that the first gallery was well stocked with ladies.

Apparently it was a great hit. It fetched thunders of joyous enthusiasm out of the Christian Socialists, and in their rapture they flung biting epithets with wasteful liberality at specially detested members of the Opposition; among others, this one at Schönerer: "*Bordell in der Krugerstrasse!*" Then they added these words, which they whooped, howled, and also even sang, in a deep-voiced chorus: "*Schmul lieb' Kohn! Schmul lieb' Kohn! Schmul lieb' Kohn!*" and made it splendidly audible above the banging of desk-boards and the rest of the roaring cyclone of fiendish noises. [A gallery witticism comes flitting by from mouth to mouth around the great curve: "The swan-song of Austrian representative government!" You can note its progress by the applausive smiles and nods it gets as it skims along.]

Kletzenbauer. "Holofernes, where is Judith?" [Storm of laughter.]

Gregorig (the shirt-merchant). "This Wolf-Theater is costing six thousand florins!"

Wolf (with sweetness). "Notice him, gentlemen; it is Mr. Gregorig." [Laughter.]

Vielohlawek (to *Wolf*). "You Judas!"

Schneider. "Brothel-Knight!"

Chorus of Voices. "East-German offal-tub!"

And so the war of epithets crashes along, with never-diminishing energy, for a couple of hours.

The ladies in the gallery were learning. That was well; for by and by ladies will form a part of the membership of all the legislatures in the world; as soon as they can prove competency they will be admitted. At present, men only are competent to legislate; therefore they look down upon women, and would feel degraded if they had to have them for colleagues in their high calling.

Wolf is yelling another market report now.

Gessman. "Shut up, infamous louse-brat!"

During a momentary lull *Dr. Lueger* gets a hearing for three sentences of his speech. They demand and require that the President shall suppress the four noisiest members of the Opposition.

Wolf (with a that-settles-it toss of the head). "The shifty trickster of Vienna has spoken!"

Iro belonged to *Schönerer's* party. The word-of-honor incident has given it a new name. *Gregorig* is a Christian Socialist, and hero of the post-cards and the *Wimberger* soda-squirting incident. He stands vast and conspicuous, and conceited and self-satisfied, and roosterish and inconsequential, at *Lueger's* elbow, and is proud and cocky to be in such great company. He looks very well indeed; really majestic, and aware of it. He crows out his little empty remark, now and then, and looks as pleased as if he had been delivered of the *Ausgleich*. Indeed, he does look notably fine. He wears almost the only dress vest on the floor: it exposes a continental spread of white shirt-front; his hands are posed at ease in the lips of his trousers pockets; his head is tilted back complacently; he is attitudinizing; he is playing to the gallery. However, they are all doing that. It is curious to see. Men who only vote, and can't make speeches, and don't know how to invent witty ejaculations, wander about the vacated parts of the floor, and stop in a good place and strike attitudes - - attitudes suggestive of weighty thought, mostly and glance furtively up at the galleries to see how it works; or a couple will come together and shake hands in an artificial way, and laugh a gay manufactured laugh, and do some constrained and self-conscious attitudinizing; and *they* steal glances at the galleries to see if they are getting notice. It is like a scene on the stage by-play by minor actors at the back while the stars do the great work at the front. Even *Count Badeni* attitudinizes for a moment; strikes a reflective

Napoleonic attitude of fine picturesqueness -- but soon thinks better of it and desists.
There are two who

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do not attitudinize -- poor harried and insulted President Abrahamowicz, who seems wholly miserable, and can find no way to put in the dreary time but by swinging his bell and by discharging occasional remarks which nobody can hear; and a resigned and patient priest, who sits lonely in a great vacancy on Majority territory and munches an apple.

Schönerer uplifts his fog-horn of a voice and shakes the roof with an insult discharged at the Majority.

Dr. Lueger. "The Honorless Party would better keep still here!"

Gregorig (the echo, swelling out his shirt-front). "Yes, keep quiet, pimp!"

Schönerer (to Lueger). "Political mountebank!"

Prochazka (to Schönerer). "Drunken clown!"

During the final hour of the sitting many happy phrases were distributed through the proceedings. Among them were these -- and they are strikingly good ones:

Blatherskite!

Blackguard!

Scoundrel!

Brothel-daddy!

This last was the contribution of Dr. Gessman, and gave great satisfaction. And deservedly. It seems to me that it was one of the most sparkling things that was said during the whole evening.

At half-past two in the morning the House adjourned. The victory was with the Opposition. No; not quite that. The effective part of it was snatched away from them by an unlawful exercise of Presidential force -- another contribution toward driving the mistreated Minority out of their minds.

At other sittings of the parliament, gentlemen of the Opposition, shaking their fists toward the President, addressed him as "Polish Dog." At one sitting an angry deputy turned upon a colleague and shouted,

"-----!"

You must try to imagine what it was. If I should offer it even in the original it would probably not get by the Magazine editor's blue pencil; to offer a translation would be to waste my ink, of course. This remark was frankly printed in its entirety by one of the Vienna dailies, but the others disguised the toughest half of it with stars.

If the reader will go back over this chapter and gather its array of extraordinary epithets into a bunch and examine them, he will marvel at two things: how this convention of gentlemen could consent to use such gross terms; and why the users were allowed to get out of the place alive. There is no way to understand this strange situation. If every man in the House were a professional blackguard, and had his home in a sailor boarding-house, one could still not understand it; for although that sort do use such terms, they never *take* them. These men are not professional blackguards; they are mainly gentlemen, and educated; yet they use the terms, and take them, too. They really seem to attach no consequence to them. One cannot say that they act like school-boys; for that is only almost true, not entirely. School-boys black-guard each other fiercely, and by the hour, and one would think that nothing would ever come of it but noise; but that would be a mistake. Up to a certain limit the result would be noise only, but that limit overstepped, trouble would follow right away. There are certain phrases -- phrases of a peculiar character -- phrases of the nature of that reference to Schönerer's grandmother, for instance, which not even the most spiritless school-boy in the English-speaking world would allow to pass unavenged. One difference between school-boys and the lawmakers of the Reichsrath seems to be that the lawmakers have no limit, no danger-line. Apparently they may call each other what they please, and go home un mutilated.

Now, in fact, they did have a scuffle on two occasions, but it was not on account of names called. There has been no scuffle where *that* was the cause.

It is not to be inferred that the House lacks a sense of honor because it lacks delicacy. That would be an error. Iro was caught in a lie, and it profoundly disgraced him. The House cut him, turned its back upon him. He resigned his seat; otherwise he would have been expelled. But it was lenient with Gregorig, who had called Iro a cowardly blatherskite in debate. It merely went through the form of mildly censuring him. That did not trouble Gregorig.

The Viennese say of themselves that they are an easy-going, pleasure-loving community, making the best of life, and not taking it very seriously. Neverthe-

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less, they are grieved about the ways of their parliament, and say quite frankly that they are ashamed. They claim that the low condition of the parliament's manners is new, not old. A gentleman who was at the head of the government twenty years ago confirms this, and says that in his time the parliament was orderly and well behaved.* An English

gentleman of long residence here indorses this, and says that a low order of politicians originated the present forms of questionable speech on the stump some years ago, and imported them into the parliament. However, some day there will be a Minister of Etiquette and a sergeant-at-arms, and then things will go better. I mean if parliament and the Constitution survive the present storm.

IV. THE HISTORIC CLIMAX

During the whole of November things went from bad to worse. The all-important *Ausgleich* remained hard aground, and could not be sparred off. Badeni's government could not withdraw the Language Ordinance and keep its majority, and the Opposition could not be placated on easier terms. One night, while the customary pandemonium was crashing and thundering along at its best, a fight broke out. It was a surging, struggling, shoulder-to-shoulder scramble. A great many blows were struck. Twice Schönerer lifted one of the heavy ministerial fauteuils -- some say with one hand -- and threatened members of the Majority with it, but it was wrenched away from him; a member hammered Wolf over the head with the President's bell, and another member choked him; a professor was flung down and belabored with fists and choked; he held up an open penknife as a defense against the blows; it was snatched from him and flung to a distance; it hit a peaceful Christian Socialist who wasn't doing anything, and brought blood from his hand. This was the only blood drawn. The men who got hammered and choked looked sound and well next day. The fists and the bell were not properly handled, or better results would have been apparent. I am quite sure that the fighters were not in earnest.

On Thanksgiving day the sitting was a history-making one. On that day the harried, bedeviled, and despairing government went insane. In order to free itself from the thralldom of the Opposition it committed this curiously juvenile crime: it moved an important change of the Rules of the House, forbade debate upon the motion, put it to a stand-up vote instead of ayes and noes, and then gravely claimed that it had been adopted; whereas, to even the dullest witness -- if I without immodesty may pretend to that place -- it was plain that nothing legitimately to be called a vote had been taken at all.

I think that Saltpeter never uttered a truer thing than when he said, "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad."

Evidently the government's mind was tottering when this bald insult to the House was the best way it could contrive for getting out of the frying-pan.

The episode would have been funny if the matter at stake had been a trifle; but in the circumstances it was pathetic. The usual storm was raging in the House. As usual, many of the Majority and the most of the Minority were standing up -- to have a better chance to exchange epithets and make other noises. Into this storm Count Falkenhayn entered, with his paper in his hand; and at once there was a rush to get near him and hear him read his motion. In a moment he was walled in by listeners. The several clauses of his motion were loudly applauded by these allies, and as loudly disapproved -- if I may invent a

word -- by such of the Opposition as could hear his voice. When he took his seat the President promptly put the motion -- persons desiring to vote in the affirmative, *stand up!* The House was already standing up; had been standing for an hour; and before a third of it had found out what the President had been saying, he had proclaimed the adoption of the motion! And only a few heard *that*. In fact, when that House is legislating you can't tell it from artillery practice.

You will realize what a happy idea it was to sidetrack the lawful ayes and noes and substitute a stand-up vote by this fact: that a little later, when a deputation of deputies waited upon the President and asked him if he was actually

*"In that gracious bygone time when a mild and good-tempered spirit was the atmosphere of our House, when the manner of our speakers was studiously formal and academic, and the storms and explosions of to-day were wholly unknown," etc.-- Translation of the opening remark of an editorial in this morning's *Neue Freie Presse*, December 1, 1897.-- M.T.

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willing to claim that that measure had been passed, he answered, "Yes -- and *unanimously*." It shows that in effect the whole house was on its feet when that trick was sprung.

The "Lex Falkenhayn," thus strangely born, gave the President power to suspend for three days any deputy who should continue to be disorderly after being called to order twice, and it also placed at his disposal such force as might be necessary to make the suspension effective. So the House had a sergent-at-arms at last, and a more formidable one, as to power, than any other legislature in Christendom had ever possessed. The Lex Falkenhayn also gave the House itself authority to suspend members for *thirty* days.

On these terms the *Ausgleich* could be put through in an hour -- apparently. The Opposition would have to sit meek and quiet, and stop obstructing, or be turned into the street, deputy after deputy, leaving the Majority an unvexed field for its work.

Certainly the thing looked well. The government was out of the frying-pan at last. It congratulated itself, and was almost girlishly happy. Its stock rose suddenly from less than nothing to a premium. It confessed to itself, with pride, that its Lex Falkenhayn was a master-stroke -- a work of genius.

However, there were doubters; men who were troubled, and believed that a grave mistake had been made. It might be that the Opposition was crushed, and profitably for the country, too; but the manner of it -- the *manner* of it! That was the serious part. It could have far-reaching results; results whose gravity might transcend all guessing. It might be the initial step toward a return to government by force, a restoration of the irresponsible methods of obsolete times.

There were no vacant seats in the galleries next day. In fact, standing-room outside the building was at a premium. There were crowds there, and a glittering array of helmeted and brass-buttoned police, on foot and on horseback, to keep them from getting too much excited. No one could guess what was going to happen, but every one felt that *something* was going to happen, and hoped he might have a chance to see it, or at least get the news of it while it was fresh.

At noon the House was empty -- for I do not count myself. Half an hour later the two galleries were solidly packed, the floor still empty. Another half-hour later Wolf entered and passed to his place; then other deputies began to stream in, among them many forms and faces grown familiar of late. By one o'clock the membership was present in full force. A band of Socialists stood grouped against the ministerial desks, in the shadow of the Presidential tribune. It was observable that these official strongholds were now protected against rushes by bolted gates, and that these were in ward of servants wearing the House's livery. Also the removable desk-boards had been taken away, and nothing left for disorderly members to slat with.

There was a pervading, anxious hush -- at least what stood very well for a hush in that house. It was believed by many that the Opposition was cowed, and that there would be no more obstruction, no more noise. That was an error.

Presently the President entered by the distant door to the right, followed by Vice-President Fuchs, and the two took their way down past the Polish benches toward the tribune. Instantly the customary storm of noises burst out, and rose higher and higher, and wilder and wilder, and really seemed to surpass anything that had gone before it in that place. The President took his seat, and begged for order, but no one could hear him. His lips moved -- one could see that; he bowed his body forward appealingly, and spread his great hand eloquently over his breast -- one could see that; but as concerned his uttered words, he probably could not hear them himself. Below him was that crowd of two dozen Socialists glaring up at him, shaking their fists at him, roaring imprecations and insulting epithets at him. This went on for some time. Suddenly the Socialists burst through the gates and stormed up through the ministerial benches, and a man in a red cravat reached up and snatched the documents that lay on the President's desk and flung them abroad. The next moment he and his allies were struggling and fighting with the half-dozen uniformed servants who were there to protect the new gates. Meantime a detail of Socialists had swarmed up the side-steps and overflowed the President and the Vice, and were crowding and shouldering and shoving them out of the place. They

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crowded them out, and down the steps and across the House, past the Polish benches; and all about them swarmed hostile Poles and Czechs, who resisted them. One could see fists go up and come down, with other signs and shows of a heady fight; then the President and the Vice disappeared through the door of entrance, and the victorious Socialists turned and marched back, mounted the tribune, flung the President's bell and his

remaining papers abroad, and then stood there in a compact little crowd, eleven strong, and held the place as if it were a fortress. Their friends on the floor were in a frenzy of triumph, and manifested it in their deafening way. The whole House was on its feet, amazed and wondering.

It was an astonishing situation, and imposingly dramatic. Nobody had looked for this. The unexpected had happened. What next? But there *can* be no next; the play is over; the grand climax is reached; the possibilities are exhausted: ring down the curtain.

Not yet. That distant door opens again. And now we see what history will be talking of five centuries hence: a uniformed and helmeted battalion of bronzed and stalwart men marching in double file down the floor of the House -- a free parliament profaned by an invasion of brute force.

It was an odious spectacle -- odious and awful. For one moment it was an unbelievable thing -- a thing beyond all credibility; it must be a delusion, a dream, a nightmare. But no, it was real -- pitifully real, shamefully real, hideously real. These sixty policemen had been soldiers, and they went at their work with the cold un sentimentality of their trade. They ascended the steps of the tribune, laid their hands upon the inviolable persons of the representatives of a nation, and dragged and tugged and hauled them down the steps and out at the door; then ranged themselves in stately military array in front of the ministerial estrade, and so stood.

It was a tremendous episode. The memory of it will outlast all the thrones that exist today. In the whole history of free parliaments the like of it had been seen but three times before. It takes its imposing place among the world's unforgettable things. I think that in my lifetime I have not twice seen abiding history made before any eyes, but I know that I have seen it once.

Some of the results of this wild freak followed instantly. The Badeni government came down with a crash; there was a popular outbreak or two in Vienna; there were three or four days of furious rioting in Prague, followed by the establishing there of martial law; the Jews and Germans were harried and plundered, and their houses destroyed; in other Bohemian towns there was rioting -- in some cases the Germans being the rioters, in others the Czechs -- and in all cases the Jew had to roast, no matter which side he was on. We are well along in December now,* the new Minister-President has not been able to patch up a peace among the warring factions of the parliament, therefore there is no use in calling it together again for the present; public opinion believes that parliamentary government and the Constitution are actually threatened with extinction, and that the permanency of the monarchy itself is a not absolutely certain thing!

Yes, the Lex Falkenhayn was a great invention, and did what was claimed for it -- it got the government out of the frying-pan.

* It is the 9th.--M.T.

END

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Contact James Niessen for questions about the Habsburg website:
niessen@mail.h-net.msu.edu