

**LONDON GOVERNMENT.
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ACT, 1888, IN ITS
APPLICATION TO LONDON**

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London Government. The Local Government Act, 1888, in Its Application to London by
Henry Clarke

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HENRY CLARKE

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IN ITS APPLICATION TO
LONDON.

BY

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"MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT OF LONDON, 1882."

"APPENDIX TO MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT OF LONDON, 1884."

"24 REASONS AGAINST SIR WM. HARGREY'S LONDON
GOVERNMENT BILL, 1884."

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PREFACE.

PERHAPS it is premature to assert that Mr. Ritchie has solved the difficult problem of Metropolitan Government, but it may be safely claimed for him that his Local Government Bill, which has now received the sanction of Parliament, has rescued the question from the position of doubt, uncertainty, and bewilderment which it has occupied for so long a period. Even if the scheme evolved by him should not prove perfect in all respects, it will certainly carry the matter a long way towards perfection; and it presents a good foundation whereon to raise a complete superstructure, as experience may suggest variations and improvements from time to time.

It may be in the remembrance of those who have followed this subject for many years, that Mr. J. F. B. Firth, then (1880) Member for Chelsea, published a scheme having for its object the extinction of every existing Local Governing body, and the erection of one sole municipality for the whole of London. A league, called the Metropolitan Government Reform League, was established to advocate this plan.

Others and myself have strenuously opposed this centralizing policy; and have advocated, as an

alternative plan, local authorities for local purposes, and a central authority for the management and control of all things concerning the Metropolis as a whole. This principle is carried out in Mr. Ritchie's Bill. It is somewhat amusing to find that members of the League claim to participate with Mr. Ritchie in the credit of his success, and it must be a source of much satisfaction to the Secretary of the Local Government Board that he has been able to please all parties.

Sir Wm. Harcourt in his Bill of 1884, influenced by the League, proposed to abolish the Corporation of the City of London, the Metropolitan Board of Works, and the Vestries. To excite the opposition of all these bodies was to court failure, even had his scheme been otherwise unobjectionable. His successor, profiting by past failures, determined to supersede only that body which no one pretended to uphold as it is at present constituted—the Metropolitan Board of Works—and to incorporate the City Municipality and the Vestries in his scheme, reserving the right of introducing such modification in the Vestries and District Boards, as may be found necessary at a future time.

Mr. Ritchie thus secured the Corporation as an ally, and its powerful support, both overt and covert, has been given ungrudgingly; thus again refuting the oft-repeated accusation of opponents,

that the Corporation had ever opposed and always would oppose any measure of reform for the Government of London.

It is a noteworthy fact that not one petition was presented to Parliament from London in opposition to the Bill (so far as relates to Metropolitan Government).

It rests now with the inhabitants of the Metropolis to make the measure successful in practical operation. A heavy task faces all those whose duty it will be to set the huge machine in motion, and to give it such an impetus as may ensure final success.

All who recognize the importance of this experiment, will watch with keen interest the impending "first elections"; so much depending upon the composition and tone of this first Metropolitan Parliament. It is to be devoutly hoped that men of character, independent position, and administrative ability will offer themselves as candidates for the Council.

It is rumoured that the elections are to be made subservient to party politics. This would be deplorable! What have politics properly to do with Municipal Government?

In selecting a candidate for Parliament, your first care is to know whether he is a supporter of your side of politics or not; his own qualifications