

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

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The House of Commons by Richard Temple

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RICHARD TEMPLE

**THE HOUSE
OF COMMONS**

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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

The

House of Commons

By
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Preface

THE Chapters of this little work relate to the House of Commons in the present time. The book is intended to serve as a short and easy manual for those who may desire to acquire a fundamental though elementary idea of our representative institution as it is in all its vivid reality and in its overwhelming importance,—but who may not be able to attend and hear the Debates or have not been personally conducted round the House by their members. As stated in the introductory Chapter, my account is derived from the experience of a

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decade, 1885 to 1895, which was indeed eventful. Still no attempt is made to recount the parliamentary history of that decade, although it comprised both of the attempts made by Mr. Gladstone to pass through Parliament Bills for Home Rule in Ireland, the consequent break-up of the old Liberal party,—the alliance between one wing of that party as Liberal Unionists with the Conservatives,—the formation of a new Party under the name of Gladstonians,—the permanent measure for the repression of political outrages in Ireland,—the desperate resistance to that arrangement offered by the Irish Nationalist party returned to the House in potent strength by the Election of 1885 under Mr. Parnell,—the apparent confusion of that Party after his retirement and death,—the constitution of a strong Conservative Party Administration with

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the support, but without the junction, of the Liberal Unionists, for one long Parliament,— the subsequent accession of the Gladstonians to power for a short Parliament,—and then the formation of a Conservative Administration, this time with the practical junction of the Liberal Unionists, so that the combined Party in power since 1895 has borne the name of Unionist,—the policy pursued by Parliament through all these changes being fraught with momentous results both at home and abroad. These many points of contemporary history must be of much interest to countless persons still living. But they could hardly be set forth by anyone who, like myself, had been an actor in the events, without some bias, or some partiality, real or supposed, towards one or other of the two opposing sides. My object has been to indicate the ways of the House

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of Commons as they would appear to any observer, whether he happened to belong to one side or to the other of politics—to pourtray things relating to the House at large, without reference to the organization of any one Party in particular or to any sectional division. But, if such organizations and divisions are mentioned at all, they are alluded to all alike in reference to their several Parties. In this manner an aspect of impartiality is, I hope, tolerably well preserved. So the points brought forward are such as no Member would object to, be he Conservative or Liberal; nor yet would he claim any one of them as exclusively pertaining to his own Party.

With this general intention the work is divided into Nine Chapters. The first is introductory, setting forth the qualities, the abilities, the capacities, of the House elected in the General Election of 1885,