

**ELECTIONS, ELECTORS
AND ELECTED.
STORIES OF ELECTIONS
PAST AND PRESENT**

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Elections, Electors and Elected. Stories of Elections Past and Present by R. G. Webster

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R. G. WEBSTER

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Elections, Electors and Elected

Stories of Elections Past and Present

By

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To
OLD ACQUAINTANCES
IN THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS
THE AUTHOR INSCRIBES
THESE PAGES

Preface

THOSE who wish for a complete guide to the conduct of a parliamentary election will have to consult the many text-books on that subject, though in these pages will be found many hints—useful hints, it is my hope—conducive to success, and not to be found elsewhere. From my experience as a candidate in five contested parliamentary elections, and as one who has assisted in scores of other contests, who has been returned to Parliament in the majority of the former, and has had the satisfaction of aiding the victorious candidates in the vastly greater number of the latter elections, I have often found that local enthusiasm and the lack of knowledge as to the right way to fight an election have led many candidates, their agents and supporters, into all sorts of political pitfalls, purposely placed in their way by astute

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opponents. Endless time and energy have been wasted on all sorts of false issues, whilst the real question before the electors has been neglected, the result being defeat.

I do not want anyone to cast this little book aside and say, "Oh, elections! that must be a dull book, as it does not deal with the subjects which I usually read about in novels—namely, love and marriage, intrigue and scandal, murder and sudden death, and other pleasant subjects." All I ask is, whoever takes this little book up, read it and judge for yourself.

And whilst deeply impressed with the importance of the subject, and that the election of a member of Parliament for any constituency is a gravely important matter, both to the man who is elected that he does his duty faithfully and well, and to his constituents that he is a useful and fitting representative, although not, as some constituencies seem to imagine, the fountain of doles, or a sort of voluntary relieving officer, still, thank goodness! life is not all gloom; there is the bright side to everything as well as the dark, there is light and shade to every truly depicted picture. A man need not be

invariably considered clever because he is supernaturally heavy and dull and wearisome.

And whatever my critics may say, I shall, in these pages, go from grave to gay, even on this deeply important subject. The public has decided in its latter-day reading, mainly consisting of fiction, not to peruse the Lydia Languish-cum-Falkland kind of twaddle; no more can they endure a few hundred pages of the sighs and the woes of a love-sick maiden, the agonies and despair of her more or less devoted lover, ending in the overthrow of the villain, a marriage, and a live-happy-ever-after numerous-progeny chapter at the end. No; apparently, from the few novels I have recently read, they now demand a high-spirited heroine, who, together with her numerous admirers, must move in the highest circles, who passes her time in incessant love affairs and in constant travelling at home or abroad, and in visits to the houses of the aristocracy. The majority of these worthy characters must be endowed with high-sounding titles, with wealth beyond the dreams of avarice, and be, as a rule, abnormally selfish and absolutely devoid of brains.

The public, who is the king in such matters, has decided that the humorous element shall not be lacking in these works. Let it be so. But can any, even the best of them, compare in real wit and humour to the description of the Eatanswill Election in *Pickwick*? Would that any writer of the present day could compare with Dickens, that great master of the pen, who was witty without being—without leaving a nasty taste in the mouth. So was Lever, and so was Marryat. If I have before me such examples who dealt with elections, our army, and our navy, both in the serious and also in the lighter vein—and how many thousands of boys have joined our navy partly through reading *Midshipman Easy*, and turned out to be gallant sailors?—if I have such examples before me, I know I shall be pardoned by the less exacting if I, too, attempt, however imperfectly, to emulate their example. I purpose in these pages not only to give many of my own personal experiences at elections, as well as those of others, both in the past and at the present day, but to avoid as far as practicable—though to do so entirely would be difficult—allusions to any

burning political question of the day. The country will ere long be engaged in the throes of a General Election. The name I believe I was generally known by in the "House" was "R. G.," and "R. G.," therefore, wishes that the best men may win. But who "the best men" are he leaves for others to decide.

R. G. W.

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