

From an English Office Window

MIDDLE TEMPLAR

Gilbert & Sullivan

One of the most remarkable phenomena in the social life of the present day is the sustained popularity of the Gilbert & Sullivan operas, not only among the English-speaking peoples but even beyond. The B.B.C. have been stimulating the interest by repeating a series of broadcasts describing the partnership between the dramatist and the musician. They have competed with and superseded subjects of current news for table talk in the Temple or wherever men and women come together. There is a good reason for lawyers to keep alive the memory of W. S. Gilbert for he was a member of the Bar. Judge Parry, who himself possessed no mean literary ability, has told the story of Gilbert's life in the Dictionary of National Biography. The early years were full of episodes from the time that he was kidnapped by brigands in Naples at the age of two. After being a soldier and civil servant he was called to the Bar at the Inner Temple on November 17th, 1863. He read in the chamber of Sir Charles Watkin Williams and had rooms in Clement's Inn, though he does not appear to have had a set of professional chambers or address in the Law List. The Judge adds that "he attended the Westminster courts, the Old Bailey, the Manchester and Liverpool assizes, the Liverpool sessions and Passage Court but only earned £75 in two years". When success with his plays had provided him with substantial funds he bought an estate in the Harrow Weald. To it he added an observatory since he was something of an astronomer as well as a dairy farmer, bee-keeper and horticulturist. Nevertheless he took his place in the County, of which he became Deputy Lieutenant, and was able to make use of his legal knowledge in the office of Justice of the Peace to which he devoted much time.

The younger generation are just as keen on the plays as the older who inherited some of the original popularity and may remember some of the topical allusions. But to many they can

only be rollicking lines, as "stick to your desks and never go to sea and you'll be rulers of the Queen's Navee" which was prompted by the appointment of Mr. W. H. Smith, the well-known news agent, as First Lord of the Admiralty. It may be that the greatest attraction of all is the clean fun which runs through all the operas. When the day comes for the Inner Temple once again to have a hall for its festivities, there could be no more appropriate item in the programme of the opening ceremonies than the performance of one of Gilbert's plays, based upon his legal knowledge, by the students of the Inn.

Temple Church

An interesting offer, typical of plans which are being made for restoration of the Temple, has been made to the Benchers of the Inner and Middle Temple as joint custodians of the Temple Church. Before the war the Worshipful Company of Glaziers and Painters of Glass had approached the Benchers with a view to presenting an east window worthy of the famous Round Church. They are one of the ancient guilds of the City of London with a history extending back over six centuries. It is certain therefore that their gift will be of the finest workmanship and the Benchers of the two Inns will have a choice of the design. In a scene of ruin it is something to which Templars and the many others with affectionate memories of the Church can look forward with hope of an addition enhancing its former dignity. In the meantime steps have been taken to maintain the security of the remains of the building, though it is still uncertain how much can be regarded as safe for permanent retention.

Combines' Investigation

Last year the Parliament of the United Kingdom passed an Act (11 & 12 Geo. VI, c. 66) with a purpose similar to the Canadian Combines Investigation Act, though with the more clumsy title of the Monopolies and Restrictive Practices (Inquiry and Control) Act, 1948. After some delay the Commission to put the Act into operation has been appointed, with eight members including Mr. Frederick Grant, K.C., and Mr. Gordon Stott, members of the English and Scottish Bars respectively. It will not initiate inquiries but will investigate matters referred to it by the Board of Trade. The procedure under the Act is one of investigation and report to Parliament, which by resolution may

authorise the competent authority by means of a statutory instrument to give directions for the termination of the conditions disapproved by the Commission. There is nothing in the Act to link it up with criminal proceedings, similar to the Canadian Act of 1946. "Competent authority" is defined by the Act to mean the Board of Trade, which has the primary responsibility for its administration, the Minister of Supply, the Minister of Works, the Minister of Fuel and Power, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Admiralty, the Minister of Food or the Secretary of State. The powers of the Commission, however, do not extend to the operation of the State industries although they are essentially monopolies.

The primary purpose of the Commission is to determine whether monopolistic conditions exist and if they do whether they are contrary to the public interest. With the support of public opinion the Commission may make a useful contribution to the country's economic necessity by aiding by all means within its power the raising of output and productivity. Its aim should be not merely a negative one of detecting unsatisfactory practices but positive in creating a code of business practices favourable to the extension of industry.

Housing

It would be difficult to find a more prolific subject of legislation throughout the British Commonwealth and Empire — and even foreign countries — than housing at the present time. Yet it is probably true to say, as has been said of the position in England, that no one knows exactly what are the requirements. P.E.P. (Political and Economic Planning) has recently devoted one of its illuminating monographs to the subject. That organization conducts research on a scientific basis. "Not even the total number of dwellings in England and Wales is known", it contends, "still less their types, sizes and rents or what sized families live in what sized houses." Various legislatures have created State organizations to make surveys but they rarely adopt the point of view from which P.E.P. surveys the subject. Their surveys are conducted in relation to general planning while the actual need of the people should be the primary consideration. P.E.P. puts the following questions: "Is there already enough suitable accommodation for family needs? Is the shortage caused by the effective demand for separate dwellings by people without family responsibilities? Could this demand be more economically

met by alternative means — hotels, hostels or clubs? How much under-occupation of existing dwellings is there? Can existing housing be adapted so as more conveniently to meet the needs of the average household? At any given standard of amenities, what is the burden of sub-standard property which has to be replaced?" There may be local surveys providing answers for some areas but obviously legislation requires a comprehensive basis for the whole country.

Mobile Food

During the war mobile canteens provided by the British Red Cross Society or the local authorities were necessary in connection with the civil defence services for the people whose homes were destroyed by enemy action. Food rationing has led to further developments in the supply of cooked food. Particularly in the towns the Red Cross and other vehicles have been converted for a meals service for the benefit of old age pensioners and others, who thus obtain a hot meal delivered at their doors. In the country there has been a development of the travelling food services on a commercial basis, which were in operation before the war. Among others, Mr. C. F. Gibbons has a motor coach employed in the sale of fish and chips in the rural parts of Kent. In order to extend his business he went to the East Peckham Motors Ltd. to buy another coach and stipulated that it should not be one of those made in the United States for the Ministry of Supply since spare parts are unobtainable. He wanted a similar coach which had been made in Canada to an English specification, spare parts for them being still available. The purchase price was £350, for which he gave his cheque, but when the coach was delivered he found that it was of American origin, thereby meaning, in the unsatisfactory use of the word in this country, the United States as distinct from Canada. The coach in other respects failed to carry out the undertaking given by the vendor, whereupon Mr. Gibbons stopped payment of his cheque. Since nothing would induce him to take the coach of doubtful origin, the East Peckham Motors Ltd. took proceedings in the King's Bench division to recover their money. In a decision, which has not been reported, Croom-Johnson J. upheld the contention of the fish and chip merchant that a man who wants a Canadian vehicle cannot be expected to accept one produced on the south side of the forty-ninth parallel.