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FLOOR PRIVILEGE

Congress Guards It Jealously In
Both Houses.

RARELY USED IN THE SENATE

Former Members of That Body, While
Free to Attend Its Sessions, Prefer
to Shun the Scene of Their Solonic
Efforts—A Story of Evarts.

What is known as "the privilege of the floor" in congress is the right to go upon the floor of the senate or house when either body is in session.

Although the right to go upon the floor of a legislative body is not so exclusive a privilege in some of the state legislatures, it is a great privilege and an exclusive one in congress. The doors are carefully guarded while congress is in session, and it is sometimes exceedingly difficult to have access to senators or representatives when public business is being done.

Senators and representatives have no regular or rigid rule on the subject, but it is known in Washington that the statesmen feel that their constituents or others who desire to see them privately should endeavor to do so in their offices, their committee rooms or at their residences.

To former members of the senate and house "the privilege of the floor" is given, but they do not often avail themselves of that right. This, however, is in strong contrast to the customs of twenty years ago and longer, when it was not uncommon to see former members moving about on the floor of the house when it was notoriously known that they were lobbying for some private claim or public graft.

Speaker Reed found this condition so obnoxious that he issued orders that no ex-members should be permitted to pass the doorkeepers without written authority from the speaker. Subsequent speakers have not found it necessary to draw the lines so rigidly, because the abuse has almost entirely ceased.

There is an unwritten law, however, governing the privilege of the floor of the senate, and it is the unwritten

law of good breeding, good manners and common sense. Every ex-senator has the privilege of the floor, but it is so seldom exercised that its abuse has never occurred, nor is it ever likely to occur.

Former members of the senate are never seen there unless it is well known that they have proper business calling them to Washington, such as appearing before the supreme court as attorneys for clients in great cases, and even then it seldom happens that an ex-senator thus engaged ever enters upon the senate floor, although in going to and from the room of the supreme court they are obliged to pass by its doors.

After James G. Blaine ceased to be a senator he avoided the senate chamber forever. After resigning from that body Senator Roscoe Conkling of New York never entered the senate chamber, although he was often in the capitol on business before the supreme court. There was an exception, however, in one instance. By invitation he was one of the pallbearers of Senator Logan of Illinois, who was buried with obsequies from the senate chamber, and on that occasion Senator Conkling was present. Senator Benjamin Harrison upon leaving the senate never crossed its threshold until he went there to be inaugurated as president. Senator Dawes of Massachusetts, Senator Blair of New Hampshire, Senator Don Cameron of Pennsylvania, Senator Thurman of Ohio and Senator McDonald of Indiana are examples of distinguished senators who remained away from the senate after their terms expired. During the period of four years when he was in retirement Senator Gorman of Maryland never availed himself of the privilege of the floor, and during the two years he was without election Senator Quay of Pennsylvania absented himself from the senate chamber.

From a veteran employee of the senate there is gleaned an unusually interesting story concerning the late Senator Evarts of New York. This senator was one of the greatest intellects in public life for many years, but he was absentminded in small things. On one occasion he overlooked the rule about the privilege of the floor. He was entertaining Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes at his Washington home and invited his guest to accom-

pany him to the capitol. Together they walked along the capitol corridor, and when they came to the door of the senate they entered together.

There was a copy of the senate rules on each side of the doors, but Senator Evarts did not look at them, nor, of course, did his guest. The doorkeepers did not interfere or ask any questions.

Well, Senator Evarts gave Dr. Holmes a seat in the rear of the desks of the members and proceeded to bring Senators Hoar, Quay, Hawley and others to introduce to him. Quite a levee was held there, and Dr. Holmes was gratified with his reception.

After awhile Senator Hoar went to Senator Evarts and, calling his attention to the rule concerning the privilege of the floor, asked, "How did you get him in?"

"He is my private secretary," said Senator Evarts quickly, with a boyish twinkle in his serious eyes. At that time private secretaries of members were allowed the floor privilege.—Smith D. Fry in Washington Star.

"Dinner of Deadly Enemies."

Lady Randolph Churchill once gave at her house in Connaught place what she called a dinner of deadly enemies. It was thought, says Mr. G. W. Smalley in his "Anglo-American Memories," a hazardous experiment. "It proved a complete success. They were all well bred people. They all recognized their obligations to their hostess as paramount for the time being. In some cases ancient animosities were softened. In all they were suspended."

The Shoplifter.

Old Jed Shucks and his wife had visited New York city, and after they got home Jed was describing to his friends the wonders of city ways.

"An' we went to a big department shop," he said, "an' we got inter one o' them 'ere things wot whizzes ye clean up to the top—what in tarnation is their name, ma?"

"Shoplifters, Jedediar," Mrs. Shucks replied.

A Protection.

"Any man looks stupid when he wears a monocle," said the critical girl.

"That's why so many of us fellows wear 'em," replied the candid youth. "If we happen to look stupid we blame the monocle."—Washington Star.

No Wedding Day Bargain.

The Husband (during the quarrel)—You're always making bargains. Was there ever a time when you didn't? The Wife—Yes, sir; on my wedding day.—Variety Life.

The Cynic.

"Married yet, old man?"
"No, but I'm engaged, and that's as good as married."
"It's better, if you only knew it."

Suffering is part of the divine idea.—Beecher.

The Dear Girl.

Milly—You know, dear, we've been engaged for two years, and I think it's time we were getting married. Tilley—Oh, I don't know, dear. If you really love him you'll let him be happy for a little longer yet.

Pandemonium.

"Nature knew what she was doing when she deprived fishes of a voice."
"How do you make that out?"
"What if a fish had to cackle over every egg it laid?"—Exchange.

Fame can never make us lie down contentedly on a deathbed.—Pope.

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