

## English Jottings.

REALLY some of the English society papers are carrying the anti-Royalty mania to the extreme. A little of it is wholesome enough, and may serve as an antidote to toadyism, but it is time some sort of a limit was set to this kind of thing when a leading London paper devotes its first page to such stuff as this:—

"By the way, people are asking themselves why Her Majesty came back from Grasse just now? There was certainly nothing to call her back for another week or two; nor, indeed, for the matter of that, need she have come back till the end of the season, and she could have gone direct from Grasse to Osborne! Of course, some grumbleis would have rushed into print and complained that the British taxpayer highly disapproves of absentee Sovereigns, and so forth, but Her Majesty does not care a rushlight for such very feeble middle-class indignation, and what irresponsible journalists write about her is a matter of supreme indifference to Mrs. Great Britain, who has quite made up her mind to enjoy herself during these the last years of her life in her own way and fashion.

"But the truth of the matter is, that of late years Her Majesty has become most strangely superstitious and full of forebodings. This may be the result of old age creeping on, or it may be the outcome of these many years of Mausoleumising and moping, but be the cause what it may, the fact remains that of late years (and especially during the last eighteen months), Our Gracious Sovereign has been as full of dire and doleful presentiments as any old Irish peasant woman. Everything, even the most trivial incident, has latterly seemed to her to be full of mysterious and prophetic meaning, and even during the recent visit to Grasse, where she was unusually gay and enjoyed herself thoroughly, she became tormented with these silly superstitions.

"For instance, Her Majesty remembered that her late housemaid, Reynolds, had broken a looking-glass at Windsor just before the Royal party set out for the Continent. Of course all the superstitious fears and vague terrors came back to the mind of Her Majesty with vigour renewed tenfold when she remembered this, and during the last week of her stay at Grasse our Empress-Queen was busying herself interpreting everything, like Joseph in the Old Testament—not dreams only, but all sorts of things, and seeking to find and recognize in the most trivial facts and incidents some mysterious and prophetic meaning.

"Again, if the Princess Beatrice sneezed, Her Majesty would immediately instruct the Duke of Rutland to intimate to Lord Salisbury that it was her Sovereign pleasure that the Portuguese should be dealt with severely, as the sneeze of Beatrice would seem to say, 'Mashomaland! Mashomaland!' and she therefore feared that that South African territory might be in danger. In vain did Princesses Louise and Beatrice endeavour to reason with their August Mamma, she would not listen to them, and went on interpreting everything, looking upon all things as symbolical.

"Henry of Battenberg came strolling into his mother-in-law's sitting-room the other day at Grasse, smelling strongly of brandy, although he afterwards assured Miss Alice de Rothschild that he had chewed an ounce of cloves to cover the smell of this act of treason. The Queen detected the breach of privilege, not at a glance, but by a whiff, and at once (nor indeed was it difficult, for Henry had been indulging in so strong a 'peg' of cognac, that it lifted the roof of the cloves every time he breathed); but instead of at once taxing him with his offence and ordering him from her presence as she would have done under ordinary circumstances, she arose, and came close to Henry, who quailed at her approach and placed his large Teutonic fist over his mouth in a vain attempt to hide the tell-tale aroma.

"Then, after having gazed upon Heinrich with stony contempt as he clumsily explained how he had been over the perfumery factory that morning, and how, bending over some of the newly-distilled essences, his moustache, beard, and mouth had become impregnated with strange odours, etc., the Queen turned aside and

hastily penned a memorandum to ask Lord Lytton full particulars as to whether M. Ribot was not really deceiving us with his frank declaration, and the French were not secretly making schemes which would tend to endanger the independence of Hayti, adding to the note this explanation: 'Tell Lord Lytton to be most searching in his inquiries about this matter, for there is a smell about Henry this morning which plainly warns me that the downfall of the Negro Republic is now an imminent catastrophe.'

"Life under these circumstances became very unpleasant at Grasse for everybody, inasmuch as there are few things more uncomfortable to the average male or female Briton than to be treated as an enigma and have some one searching for your key all the time or be looked upon, even in your best clothes, as only a handwriting on the wall, or a joke in a foreign language which needs translating to be appreciated. Henry of Battenberg was bored, so he slyly pointed out that this year the birthday of Arthur of Connaught fell on a Friday. What Heinrich had foreseen happened at once, of course, the Queen returned without delay to England, dropping him *en route*, so his little plot succeeded. Willy Harry!"

A most pathetic little scene was enacted the other day in the Guardians' committee room at Huddersfield, of all places in the world. A woman, evidently in the depth of poverty—she looked as if she had never known what it is to have enough to eat—entered the room and presented the Guardians with £50. The intense delight and pride on the woman's face as she did so was beyond description. Years ago, it seems, her father had fallen into evil days, and had been obliged to accept parish relief. The woman had calculated that, in all, he had received £50, and she has worked night and day to save the money, and thus remove the stain of pauperdom from her father's memory. Think of the misery, the pinching, the starving, that £50 represents; for the donor is a charwoman, who rarely earns more than eight shillings a week. The Guardians were most unwilling to accept the money, but the woman insisted upon their doing so, for she could not rest, she said, so long as the money remained unpaid.

Another story, still more pitiable, comes from the same neighbourhood. At a meeting of the Barnsley Board of Guardians the other day, a queer revelation was made with regard to the ways of workhouse officials. Last October it was discovered that a poor old man, who is now eighty-two, and who for the last twenty years has been in the Barnsley Union, owed £3 10s. 6d. The old fellow, it seems, had received from time to time chance coppers from outsiders for doing little services; and, in spite of the temptations to spend his earnings in tobacco, or other little comforts, he had saved them every one. Why, Heaven alone knows, unless it were in the hope of thus avoiding a pauper's funeral. No sooner was it known that the money was there, than, in spite of the old man's broken-hearted remonstrances, the officials seized his little hoard, his twenty years' savings, and placed it in the bank to the account of the treasurer where it still remains.

The Guardians seem to have cordially supported the action of the officials, for one of them remarked that they really could not maintain paupers with such sums in their possession. Do they think they are elected to make the lives of our paupers as intolerable as possible? Again and again we hear of old men and women preferring death by starvation to life in a workhouse, and little wonder. Surely public opinion will force the Guardians in this case to act with common humanity, and restore to the old man the money that ought never to have been taken from him. They owe him some compensation too for having already kept it seven months. There is a special text with regard to the fate of those who oppress the poor which might be hung up with advantage in the Barnsley Guardians' committee room.

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