

## Contemporary Thought.

A BILL to pension Walt Whitman at the rate of \$25 per month has been favourably reported to Congress by the House Committee on Invalid Pensions. The report sets forth that the poet dedicated himself during the war to the unceasing care, as a volunteer nurse, of sick and wounded soldiers, his almost devotional ministrations being well known to the citizens of Washington and of the nation. It includes many extracts from newspaper articles and interviews with well-known persons attesting Mr. Whitman's faithful service during the war and his present dependent condition.

THE chief mischief which the George class of political economists is doing is in breaking down the honest pride and self-respect of the people, in leading them to grow into a belief that there is a way to obtain a living without working for it, and leading them insensibly into the conclusion that there is nothing so very dishonourable in eating bread that other men earn. This is sapping directly the manhood of the nation; this is implanting in hearts of people a disregard for the rights of others which, if continued for a little while, would make of them Bashi-Bazouks or Bedouins. Just so soon as the disposition to try leaves a man it is a sign that the dry rot has struck him, and that henceforth he is going to be a burden to his friends.—*Salt Lake City Tribune.*

LORD DUFFERIN has now been two years in India. As his health is suffering under the pressure of hard work and an unfavourable climate, there is some talk of his speedy return to England, where, perhaps, in the field of politics he may be of even more use to the Empire than he is in the distant dependency. Meanwhile the press is discussing the value of his services as an Indian administrator. It seems to be the general opinion that Lord Dufferin has been as skillful as a despot as he was as a constitutional ruler in Canada and as a diplomat at St. Petersburg or Constantinople; and it is declared that when he bids farewell to India he will leave behind him evidences of his genius in the shape of administration reforms and material improvements, by which among those who favour British rule he will ever be gratefully remembered. On his arrival in India Lord Dufferin at once set himself to work to deal with domestic questions.—*The Times (London, Eng.).*

LORD IDDESLEIGH disliked his elevation, and it is a fact that he entered the House of Lords with tears in his eyes, but I believe that more than once last session he expressed his belief that he was physically the better for the change. He hesitated whether his title should be Kennerly or Iddesleigh, but ultimately chose the latter. It was not till nearly six months had elapsed that he took the trouble to have the armorial bearings on his carriage changed. Lord Iddesleigh was a man of deep religious convictions and of true piety. He invariably conducted family prayers at Pynes. Lord Iddesleigh was proud of the name of Northcote, and he dearly loved Pynes, which is a grand old manor house of red brick, beautifully placed on a well-wooded hill which slopes to the river Exe. It contains some very fine pictures, of

which the best is a Van Dyck, in the dining-room, and at the end of that apartment is a portrait of Lord Iddesleigh which was presented to him about ten years ago by the County of Devon. There is a splendid library at Pynes. Lord Iddesleigh read the lessons at Upton Pyne Church, of which his third son, the Hon. and Rev. John Northcote, is rector, on the Sunday before his death. The church was built in 1328, and restored about ten years ago by Sir Stafford Northcote, who was lord of the manor and patron of the living.—*London World.*

THE deterioration of the tone of the press is not confined, of course, to any one department of a journal which is once affected by it. Corruption in this case, comes from the head, and the offences of the news columns are but the natural results of the weakness and inconsistencies of the editorial page. In the place of the honest principle, strong conviction and sturdy purpose which once inspired the writings of leading journalists, we now find personal spites and jealousies, the meanest sort of political rancour, insincere and cowardly treatment of great questions in which diverse interests are concerned, and a disgraceful willingness to sacrifice principle to profit. It is no longer possible to hope that this journalistic degradation is temporary or accidental. Every indication including the cowardly and dangerous treatment of the labour question, points to a deliberate determination to secure large circulation at all costs, even by pandering to the depravity of the lower and more numerous classes. Instead of attempting to set a higher standard of public taste, the newspapers have resolved to make what profits they can by lowering themselves to the level of the lowest taste that exists. The policy is as foolish as it is disgraceful. Circulation is not the measure of a newspaper's prosperity, as they will discover when they have alienated the support of intelligent and refined readers. The cultivated classes are now looking for newspapers which can be taken into their homes.—*The Critic.*

THERE are two men in Count Tolstoi. He is a mystic and a realist at once. He is addicted to the practice of a pietism that, for all its undoubted sincerity, is none the less vague and sentimental; and on the other hand, he is the most acute and dispassionate of observers, the most profound and earnest student of character and emotion. Both these Tolstois are represented in his novels. He has thought out the scheme of things for himself; his interpretation, while deeply religious, is so largely and liberally human; he is one of the just and the unjust alike, and he is no more angry with the wicked than he is unduly partial to the good. He asks but one thing of his men and women—that they shall be natural; yet it is not to be denied that he handles his humbugs and imposters with a kindness as cold and a magnanimity as equable as he displays in his treatment of their opposites. What, indeed, is apparent, is that his interest in humanity is inexhaustible, and his understanding of it almost Shakespearean in its union of breadth with delicacy. Himself an aristocrat and an official, he is able to sympathize with the Russian peasant as completely, and to express his sentiments as perfectly—as far, at all events, as the art of fiction is concerned—as he is to present the characters and give utterance to the ambitions

and the idiosyncrasies of the class to which he belongs, and may be assumed to have studied best. It is to be noted, however, that he elects to seek his material at one or other pole of society. He is equally at home with officers and privates, with diplomats and carpenters, with princes and ploughmen; but with the intermediary strata he is out of rapport, and he is careful to leave the task of presenting them to others. It is arguable (at least) that only in the highest and lowest expressions of society is nature to be found in an unsophisticated state; and that Count Tolstoi, interested less in manners than in men, and studious above all of the elemental qualities of character, has done right to avoid the bourgeoisie, and attach himself to the consideration and the representation of two classes, the highest and the lowest.—*Saturday Review.*

ON the cover of *Imperial Federation* is set forth the list of all the Colonies; and we wonder that any reader of that list should fail at once to be struck with the absurdity of proposing a federation of Great Britain with Cyprus, Labuan, Natal, Heligoland, St. Helena, and Fiji. The confederation must, of course, have a written constitution, strictly defining all rights, powers, and liabilities, otherwise there would be as many quarrels as there were calls upon any of its members for contributions or the performance of duties. To this constitution Great Britain and Heligoland must be alike subject. To interpret it, and hear appeals against its infringement, there must be a tribunal like the Supreme Court of the United States, to the authority of which all the members of the confederacy, Great Britain as well as Heligoland, must submit. Let the Imperial Federationists try their hands at drafting such a constitution, and at devising such a tribunal. They will then, at all events, be brought face to face with the practical problems which they have undertaken to solve. Let them also consider how the constitution is in the first instance to be made. The free consent of all parties will, of course, be requisite; and this, apparently, can be obtained only by means of a congress, in which each is fairly represented. In such a congress, if Heligoland or St. Helena has one representative, Canada ought to have a thousand, and Great Britain ought to have five or six thousand. That this project when brought down from the clouds and put to the test of practical discussion, will collapse, we regard as certain, and our only fear is that its catastrophe may be followed by a revulsion of feeling which would impair that moral bond between the Mother Country and the Colonies, which is incomparable more valuable than the political relation, and which, if not jeopardized by chimerical attempts to enforce political unity, may endure in increasing strength for ever. Imperial Federationists should remember that as soon as they set to work they will call all the centrifugal as well as the centripetal forces—all the jealousies and divergent interests, as well as the desire of closer connection—into play, and that the result may possibly be not only a miscarriage, but a quarrel. For India, the population of which quadruples that of the rest of the Empire, and to which, indeed, alone the name Empire can be properly applied, no provision is made by the framers of these schemes. Is it to be governed as a mere dependency by a federation comprising Cyprus, Labuan, and Fiji?—*The Week.*