

COMMERCE AND WAR.

The ramifications of British commerce have now become so extensive and numerous, and the necessity for new markets so urgent, that petty wars with African chieftains and Asiatic despots, have come to be regarded as the natural outcome of growing trade. Thus it is that to-day Britain feels herself called upon to chastise the cruel Burmese monarch who thought to enrich himself at the expense of the British trader, and at the same time secure the friendly support of Britain's Gallic rival. The Bombay and Burmah Trading Company, who have for many years held large forest leases in King Thebaw's domain, have by a corrupt process of law been condemned to pay into the Burmese treasury the sum of \$1,500,000.

It is generally supposed that this action against them was investigated by the French, but no confirmation of the suspicions being well founded has yet leaked out. In a few years the great south-western provinces of China, soon to be intersected by a net-work of railways, will have to seek an outlet for their surplus products through the valley of the Irrawaddy, or that of the Red river. Inasmuch as the contiguity of Upper Burmah to the Chinese Provinces, and to the British and French settlements at the mouths of the Irrawaddy and Red rivers, is such as to give King Thebaw the key to this important trade, Britain cannot afford to be supplanted by France, and it is therefore probable that Burmah will be annexed forthwith. To the people of that unfortunate country such a transfer of allegiance would indeed be a happy release, and with this salve to her conscience, Britannia need not hesitate in planting her flag upon the fortifications of Mandalay.

THE HARVEST OF THE SEA.

"That there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it," is a saying which the British fishermen are beginning to question, and no wonder. For years the cruel, not to say barbaric, methods of gathering the harvest of the sea round the British Isles has been slowly but surely destroying the fisheries, and yet, so far, the British economists have taken no steps to prevent the entire destruction of this important source of food supply. As an instance of the wanton injury to British fisheries may be cited the haddock fishermen of Ryemouth, Eng. During eight months, twenty-eight boats were engaged in this fishery, employing as bait 620 tons of mussels—about 47,000,000 mussels—in the capture of haddock.

In Canada and the United States the fish supply is at present so far in excess of the demand that no persistent effort has yet been made for its preservation, but the question is one which must before long be dealt with in a practical way. In the production of harvests upon land, skill, prudence and forethought are acknowledged to be requisite elements of success; but in the harvest of the sea, owing to the bounty of nature, the important factors of prudence and forethought, are neglected until all too late it is found out that the supply of fish was by no means inexhaustible, and that the inexorable law of nature that punishes waste with want, holds good alike on sea and land.

A DOWNTRODDEN PEOPLE.

Away in the sunny South under the full glare of the tropical sun lies the fertile island of Cuba, with its mixed population of Castilian office-holders, Creole land-owners, free and enslaved negroes and Chinese serfs, a heterogeneous family, disturbed by anarchy at home and ruthlessly oppressed by the iron heel of shameless tyranny. Little wonder is it that the people of this fair isle turn their eyes longingly towards the domain of the complacent Uncle Sam. Little wonder is it that they endeavour by diplomatic intrigue to create a breach between the United States and their mother land. To these overtaxed and downtrodden people, a war between Spain and the American Republic would mean liberty and freedom, and the 100 miles which separate the island from the mainland, bridged as it now is by steam and electricity, would be no impediment to having the Cuban State placed side by side with those of Florida and Alabama. With such a Union, each free family in Cuba would no longer be called upon to pay annually for its freedom the sum of \$500. As a state, the inhabitants of Cuba would no longer have yearly wrung from their pockets the enormous sum of \$26,000,000. True, the 50,000 officials who now live upon the taxes taken from the people would find their occupation gone, the titled nobility might find their rank count for nothing, the brigands who now infest the island would have to turn their attention to a somewhat more peaceable calling. The wholesale and retail business houses would be relieved from the yearly tax of \$300 for the right to transact business. The slaves would be set free and the Chinese would probably have to go, but these changes, radical as they may be, would make Cuba what God and nature intended her to be, a veritable Garden of Eden. But the change is not yet, Spain is not impetuous, and Uncle Sam who appears to have a drop of Jewish blood in his veins, hesitates to give his cheque for the \$100,000,000 for the cost of the transfer. He remembers that California, Arizona, New Mexico and a portion of Texas once belonged to an independent Spanish colony, and he has faith enough to believe that Cuba will, like Northern Mexico, eventually become a portion of his great domain.

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY.

The new world, the Americas, is the boasted home of freedom, and yet the serfdom in Russia, and slavery under the Musselmans, sinks into comparative insignificance as compared with the legalized and cruel traffic in human beings, carried on by the pioneer settlers of this continent, and perpetuated for scores of years by their less cruel but more avaricious descendants. The dark cloud of slavery which, for so many years made the vaunted freedom of the United States but a hollow mockery, was swept away by a whirlwind of civil war, and the negro of the South is now "as

free as nature first made man, ere the base laws of servitude began." In the British West Indies, thanks to the genius of Wilberforce, slavery was abolished by peaceful and just means, but in the Spanish West Indies, and in Brazil, it still remains. In Brazil, a movement is now on foot to secure the gradual abolition of slavery. In 1871 it was decreed by the Brazilian Legislature that all persons born of slave parents subsequent to that date should be free, and it was further enacted that all persons then in bondage should, at the expiration of twenty-one years, be entitled to their freedom. A liberation fund was at the same time started, to which both the Government and private individuals liberally subscribed, and immediate steps were taken to purchase and set free many of the younger slaves upon the plantations. Upwards of 500,000 slaves have so far been liberated, and it is thought, before the expiration of the term of servitude, 1892, there will be but few of the 1,000,000 persons, now remaining in bondage, that will then for the first time enjoy the charms of freedom. Ere long, we may hope, the boasted freedom of the new world will be a reality rather than a mere empty, meaningless expression. Serfdom, bondage, and slavery are relics of barbarism, and should not be permitted a foothold in the broader civilization which the Americas promise to the world.

IRELAND, THE LEAGUE, AND THE LANDLORDS.

In the last days of October, the "Irish Patriotic Union" issued a long manifesto denouncing the Irish National League and the Land League for having, during the past four or five years, "embittered Irish home life, coerced individual liberty, extorted hard-earned money from the people, and permitted the perpetration of outrages." It furthermore calls upon Irish electors to vote "against the tyranny of Parnell, and the cliques of bankrupt farmers, impecunious traders, and idle loungers who form the Land League."

Now, it is well to understand that this "Patriotic Union" is merely a Landlord Association. It is nothing surprising to find them, with the keenest bitterness, denouncing an organization having for its object the amelioration and elevation of the present unhappy state of the people of Ireland. With equal bitterness and with almost equal impotence, they denounced the old Home Rule movement, the British Land League, and the local self-government schemes.

It is amusing to hear an organization representing Irish landlords accusing any other combination of "embittering home life." In this regard, the man that throws the first stone ought himself to have innocent hands. Have the majority of Irish landlords done anything notable during the current century that did not tend to embitter home life? If they have done anything calculated to make Irish home life comfortable and happy, they must have done it by stealth. By rack-rents, by extortionate exactions, by cruel evictions in times of distress, by demanding the entire profits of honest labor in times of prosperity, and by using their influence (which has often been great, greater than now, and greater than it is ever likely to be again) to thwart remedial legislation, the landlords embittered the home life of thousands of honest, industrious families for long years, before the League they accuse had even an existence.

One would suppose, from the language of the manifesto, that before the League was formed there was not in Ireland any "coercion of individual liberty." But, unfortunately, it is an indisputable fact that before then landlord influence had put into force in Ireland infamous Coercion Acts, whose whole effect consisted in flagrant interference with "individual liberty." The few instances given of coercion of individual liberty by the aggravated opponents of landlordism, cannot properly be charged to the League, one of whose watchwords is, "Reform by peaceful and constitutional means," and whose leaders have repeatedly stated that agrarian outrages are not committed by men whom they can control, but by men too exasperated by landlords to be controlled by any person counselling peace. Indeed the results of the Coercion Acts, and the defiant attitude frequently assumed by many landlords, might reasonably be taken as an explanation of all the so-called agrarian outrages that are charged to the Irish Home Rulers.

Coercion Acts in Ireland have repeatedly suspended all constitutional guarantees of individual liberty, have set at defiance the most sacred personal rights, have introduced a degrading system of espionage, have taken thousands of men away from their homes and families upon the merest suspicion, have thrown them into prison and kept them there for months without a hearing before commitment, and even without making against them a distinct accusation. Thus and thus only have the promoters of the "Patriotic Union" been instrumental in protecting individual liberty!

The "Patriotic Union" must be sadly in need of a charge against the League, when the latter has to be accused of "extorting hard-earned money from the people." It is well known that nearly all the funds of the League come from voluntary contributions. At all events the charge against the Leaguers of being extortioners falls to the ground when it is remembered that the League is an association of the people, by the people, and solely for the people. In many Irish towns the membership of branches of the League has become inconveniently large. We doubt that the same can ever be said regarding branches of the "Patriotic Union." It is not, certainly, very encouraging for the latter to see that since October 1st, seven prominent landowners have identified themselves with the League,—one of these, Sir Henry Grattan Esmondé, a man of much influence and of marked ability. The more sensible and humane among the landlords will probably all follow the example of this grandson and namesake of the illustrious Henry Grattan, and say with him as we do, "The integrity of the Empire must be maintained, but it cannot be maintained unless justice be accorded the Irish people, and unless legislation for Ireland be in the interest of the Irish people, and not, as often heretofore, in the avowed interest of a privileged class hostile to that people."