

authority of a body which, since the days of the Tudors, has never had the power of free decision, either for the retention of the Athanasian creed, or for any other ordinance of the past.

THE majority of 130 by which the Franchise Bill was passed in the British House of Commons must have included not only all sections and shades of the Liberal party proper, but the solid Irish vote, the masters of which thereby show their conviction that the measure will add to their power, as, if they can manage to remain united among themselves, it unquestionably will. It is not certain, however—indeed it is very far from certain—that the largeness of the majority in the House of Commons indicates a corresponding amount of enthusiasm in the country. Mr. Chamberlain's caucus, having an organization in every city, can always produce mechanically a multitude of resolutions and addresses; but, to an eye accustomed to the diagnosis of opinion in England, the signs of spontaneous excitement on the Franchise question do not appear. There are no such practical objects to be gained as there were in 1830, and classes already enfranchised, though they may be not unwilling to share their political power with others, are seldom passionately desirous of the partition. The agitation which finally gave birth to the Bill of 1867 was confined to the Liberal party in parliament, or the active politicians of the great commercial cities. South of Birmingham, though the franchise question might figure in election addresses and speeches, hardly anybody really cared for a change. The consequence was that the Liberals, having launched the question for their own purposes, lost control of it, and it fell into the hands of their opponents, who, of course, settled it in their own interest. From the results of the bye-elections it would appear that in the constituencies alarm about the Union and fear of the demagogic socialism which finds its mouthpiece in Mr. Chamberlain, predominated over any desire to extend the Franchise. This must be taken into account in attempting to forecast the conduct of the House of Lords. The action of that body is invariably the resultant of two influences: its self interest as a privileged order, and its fear of a fatal collision with the people; not once in the whole course of its history, since its transformation by the Tudors, can it be said to have risen to a higher point of view. Idleness and sybaritism, which are the lot of most of these hereditary legislators, do not form great characters either in men or in assemblies. The moral position of the Lords on this Franchise question is as weak as the deadliest enemy of aristocracy could desire. Its last act was to pass, at the instigation of the most unscrupulous of tacticians, a measure, the patent and almost avowed object of which was, by enfranchising the masses of ignorance and what Carlyle called amenability to beer and balderdash, accumulated in the purlieus of the cities, to swamp the progressive intelligence of the country. The policy of "dishing the Whigs" has proved to have been as shallow as it was unprincipled. But upon what ground, consistent with public morality, or any semblance of it, can the Lords now take their stand in opposing an extension of the franchise to a class in the counties undeniably worthier and more trustworthy than that to which they have, by their own act, extended it in the towns? Can they avow their reason to be that the honest peasant would be less amenable to beer and balderdash than the populace of the cities, or proclaim their fear that household suffrage in the counties will weaken their own local influence, whereas household suffrage in the cities only weakened the influence of the respectable middle class? They may, perhaps, fix upon the Irish portion of the measure. But, if they refuse the extension to Ireland altogether, they will throw the whole Irish squadron into the arms of their enemy in the general election which will certainly ensue. If they merely refuse to Ireland a number of representatives out of proportion to the population, national feeling will support them, and the Commons will give way, as many of them, even on the Government side, would be nothing loth to do; but this will not appreciably lessen the effect of the measure upon the electorate as a whole, or upon the Lords. Brave words are uttered; but words equally brave were uttered about the Arrears Bill, which was nevertheless allowed to pass; and of the present leader of Reaction it has been said with not less truth than wit that he *saute pour mieux reculer*, and that he is a lath painted to look like iron. That battle cannot be accepted with much chance of ultimate victory on the field of the Franchise seems to be indicated by the persistent efforts of the Tory leaders in the Commons to exasperate the public mind against the Government on the question of Egypt; a not very hopeful policy, since, even if the people were more angry than it is likely that they are after the victories of Tel-el-Kebir and Teb, English elections will never be decided by anything which has only a remote interest for the great mass of the people. The probability is, therefore, that the Lords will succumb. There is very strong ground to be taken in opposition to blind and demagogic extension of the franchise.

But the man to take it must be one who has studied the problem of democracy, knows that the hour for solving that problem has come, and is prepared to deal with it, not like a demagogue or a sentimentalist, but like a statesman. Neither in the Lords nor in the Commons is such a man to be found.

THE defeat of the English Conservatives, whether desirable or not, was deserved; for the policy which they have been pursuing is one which ought not to succeed. They have been following the traditions of Lord Beaconsfield and not the traditions of Sir Robert Peel. The steadfast aim of Peel was to earn and keep for the party which he led the respect and confidence of the nation. He never forgot, in the struggle with his adversaries for power, his paramount allegiance to the interest of the country; he never factiously embarrassed the executive government, least of all when it was contending with public peril; he always loyally supported the moderate section of his opponents against the more extreme; he never formed unprincipled alliances; he never descended to paltry stratagems; he showed no indecent eagerness to take office, but on the contrary held back his impetuous followers and waited till with the full and deliberate consent of the nation he could assume real power. The men formed under him were of the same stamp; they were not intriguers or tacticians but statesmen trained to a thorough knowledge of the public business, and having solid claims to a high place in the public service. By these means he had placed on the firmest foundations the ascendancy of the Conservative party, and had he not been stabbed in the back after triumphing over the forces in his front, he might have held power for many years himself, and transmitted it to a long line of Conservative leaders after him. But the intrigue which overthrew him brought with it a complete change. From that time, not to deserve the confidence of the country, but to clamber into office, no matter by what means, became the paramount and avowed aim. Thenceforth prevailed the maxim, faithfully preserved as well as frankly enunciated by Lord Randolph Churchill, "Gain the victory, secure the fruits of it, and let moralists say what they will." To overthrow a Liberal Government by an intrigue with some extreme and disaffected section of its supporters, whether "Pop's Brass Band," Radicals, or Home Rulers, was the familiar strategy of Lord Beaconsfield, and by it his only great parliamentary victories were won. Repeatedly, as the result of these victories, he took office with a minority, and on each occasion bought a few months of power, or rather of impotence, by a fated sacrifice of principle. The men formed under him were like him, and of course unlike those formed under his predecessors. The pupils of Peel were Sidney Herbert, Gladstone, Cardwell, the Duke of Newcastle: the pupils of Beaconsfield are Lord Randolph Churchill and his set, who would have been regarded by Peel with contemptuous disgust. Had the Conservative leaders during the last three or four years controlled their personal ambition, suppressed their personal antipathies, abstained from factious embarrassment of the Executive, above all, from anything like complicity with rebellion in Ireland, and presented to the country the image of patriotism and moderation, they would have gained many adherents among the classes alarmed by Disunion or Socialism, and their feet would by this time be on the steps of power. They, or most of them—for Mr. E. Gibson, at all events, is an honourable exception—have done the very reverse. They have virtually sided with the Disunionists, they have openly coquetted with Mr. Parnell in the House of Commons, they have done their utmost to weaken the Executive in its struggle with terrorism and disorder, they have behaved on the Egyptian question with frantic factiousness, trying to put the Government in a minority even by a coalition with Mr. Labouchere, they have held the language almost of maniacs, and done everything in their power to repel from themselves national confidence and support. If they have won bye-elections it has been in spite, not in consequence, of their demeanour and their tactics. It is probable that they will now, in Committee on the Franchise Bill, try to snatch a victory over the Government by an unprincipled combination with some section of the Radicals, perhaps with the Female Suffragists, though there is hardly a man among them who does not know what the social and domestic effects of Female Suffrage would be, or who would think of voting for it except with this sinister object. For success, if they attain it, they will pay as usual by a sacrifice of principle, and by increased weakness in the future. The real Conservatives, and those who present the best rallying point for resistance to revolution are now the Moderate Liberals, such as Mr. Goschen and Mr. Albert Grey.

THE difficulty incident to an age of disturbed belief, which the Bradlaugh case at once most signally and miserably illustrates, does not fail to present itself in multiplying instances. We have now a Grand Juryman who, as an "Agnostic," declines to take an oath. It is a pity that the