

OUR ENGLISH LETTER.

This mention of fraudulent solicitors brings me to one of the leading popular topics of the day. Probably no body of men in the world with equal opportunities is as honest as the great class of solicitors. Their probity is so notorious that they are trusted with implicit confidence. It follows, therefore, that when they yield to temptation they are able to work endless havoc, and having worked it to escape scatheless. They fly to Spain or to the States and enjoy themselves, while their victims pass in melancholy procession before Mr. Justice Cave. Now, we have extradition treaties with both these nations. The one with the States is practically useless, for it covers four offences only, to wit, murder, arson, piracy and robbery. The one with Spain is a dead letter. Lord E. Fitzmaurice says that it dates from the year 1878, and that it is in force now. Nominally it may be; practically it is useless, for Mr. Ben Davis, the latest disgrace to the legal profession, is at this moment known to be luxuriating in Spain. Surely it is time that there was an end of these things? For my own part I confess to an exceedingly strong view upon the subject which would include the extradition of political offenders. There are infinite disadvantages in being the Athens of the world. England has filled that position for many centuries, and gained the practical benefit of harbouring the Spitalfields weavers, and the honour and glory of protecting the heroic Kossuth. But political conspirators are not all Kossuths; on the contrary, they are exceedingly apt to be vulgar persons full of murderous designs; and we feel this when justice fails to lay her hands upon the men who direct the efforts of the dynamitards.

The Infants Bill, which is now undergoing critical discussion in the House of Lords, is strongly symbolical of the tendencies of the age. Nothing is more

foreign to the spirit of the times than the *patria potestas* of the Romans, and in our fear of its injustice we show an inclination to the other extreme. Briefly stated, one of the effects of the Infants Bill, if it were not modified, would be that a widower, in his desire to direct the education of his children, might be thwarted by the wishes of his deceased wife. Precisely the same principle is inherent in the Married Women's Property Act which, in taking away women from the possibilities of injustice, inflicts undue hardship upon men.

The cry for more judges continues to increase in bitterness, and there is no sufficient reason for the obstinate silence with which it is received. One cause of the silence is to be found in the apathy which lawyers in Parliament invariably display whenever legal questions come to the fore; an apathy which, discreditable as it is, will never be removed until we obtain some form of class representation. Why should we not have a member for the Bar and for solicitors, as well as representatives of the Universities? Are barristers and solicitors less intelligent than the country parsons? I trow not; but outside the House of Lords there is not a statesman who cares a particle for the interests of the profession.