

we understand, due in a great measure to his own skilful and energetic negotiation. But what we must specially commend in his Speech is the tone of independence adopted towards the United States. This is a thing much needed at this juncture, when the real feeling and designs of American politicians towards Canada is being carefully and dangerously concealed under the specious cloak of a desire for Commercial Union—only to be expressed the plainer, however, accidentally, in such insolent bullying as that indulged in by the *New York Sun* on Monday last. With Sir Charles, we have no idea that the policy of non-intercourse will be adopted by the States—this threat is nothing but a little American statesmanship, which often contains a good proportion of the ingredient of “bluff;” but should it, we believe the interests of the country are quite safe in the hands of the present Administration.

THE *Spectator*, commenting on the increase of British national wealth since 1860 (an increase of income estimated at over \$1,500,000,000 a year) insisted on by Mr. Gladstone as a reason why the settled contribution of \$140,000,000 to the Sinking Fund should not be disturbed in Mr. Goschen's Budget, points out that it is the *margin* of profit, the excess of returns over expenditure, not the absolute amount of wealth, which makes taxation easy to bear. A very rich country making very small profits finds taxation much more burdensome than a much poorer country making very large profits. At present the bulk of British trade increases but slowly, while its margin of profit decreases, and has decreased for some years back. And, as a correspondent of the same journal plainly shows, whereas thirty years ago every penny of income tax produced a million sterling, now, owing to better methods of collection, it produces just double that amount. But while the collection of the Income Tax, and, indeed, of all other taxes, from the richer classes is decreasing steadily, the collection of the Income Tax from the poorer class of tolerably well-to-do persons is making up, and a little more than making up, for that decrease of Income Tax of the rich. In the interval of thirty years the taxes, too, have been taken off a vast number of commodities in general consumption, which now yield little or nothing to the revenue; so that it comes to this, that the chief burden of the repayment of the National Debt is falling on one class of the community only—the poorer class of the tolerably well-to-do. And Mr. Goschen is entirely right in relieving them; the only fair alternative, as he pointed out, to the small reduction he made—a penny on the pound—being a general revision of taxation.

It is stated that the Colonial Conference has been successful, as regards Australia at any rate, in one of its main purposes—a provision for Colonial Defence. A plan has been adopted for the maritime defence of Australia. The British Government, without reducing its own squadron in the South Pacific, will provide five armed cruisers, at an original cost of \$3,000,000, and two torpedo boats, and will not charge for their deterioration. Australia, on the other hand, will pay \$600,000 a year for the pay, keep, and other expenses of the necessary crews and equipments. The cruisers will be retained in Australia waters, and will, it is believed, with the usual force stationed there, provide adequate protection to the Australian trade. This is the beginning of a quite practicable plan of binding the Mother Country and her colonies in alliance, in which Canada might advantageously join.

An introductory chapter to the last Russo-Turkish War has just been incidentally published by the *North German Gazette*, in an article, clearly official, which alludes to a Treaty between Russia and Austria, signed in 1877, under which Austria was permitted to occupy and govern Bosnia and Herzegovina. No such treaty has ever been mentioned before, and it seems clear that possession of the two Provinces was the price paid to Austria to induce her not to interfere with the Russian advance. It has been generally supposed that the reason why Alexander II. did not march on Constantinople when he had Turkey at his feet was because he feared an attack by Austria on his flank. Lord Beaconsfield has generally had the credit of stopping that advance, but there is more likelihood that it was forbidden by Austria; and the Russian army being in an exhausted state, the Czar durst not venture farther. The dread of an Austrian attack in flank has been supposed also to have withheld the Russian advance of late, and this is not improbable. Although the Russian army is now in the very best possible condition, while the Austrian, it is well known, is in a much inferior state, yet the Austrians would be a crushing weight thrown in the scale, with the Roumanian, Bulgarian, and Turkish armies, against Russia. What is important, however, to note is the little reliance to be placed on Austria. She evidently sold herself to Russia in 1877, and Alexander II. might have marched to Constantinople unmolested if he had been able to bribe her further with another Province or two. She appears

to be incurably weak—unstable as water. In any alliance with the German Powers, England must evidently lean chiefly on the German Empire; the Austrian support may give way at the most critical moment.

THE London correspondent of the *Republique Française* says:—“Bar-risters here are entitled to submit witnesses to a veritable inquisition—namely, cross-examination—putting to them the most insidious and compromising questions; and bear in mind that the witness thus questioned on his own acts is on oath, and liable to punishment for perjury. This cross-examination is what Mr. Parnell dreads. My impression is that he will accept the falsest position rather than incur this terrible ordeal. There are many points of his public life on which Mr. Parnell is not at all anxious to be interrogated, and in saying this I have not the slightest intention of accusing him of misdemeanours or crime; I merely mean that he has secrets, many secrets.” Precisely. A man occupying the peculiar position of Mr. Parnell must, at all costs, avoid the law courts. It would never do for Bill Sykes to be apprehended for vagrancy; not because the punishment for vagrancy is to be feared, but on account of the searching enquiry that might be instituted into Bill Sykes's mode of life. So, although Mr. Parnell might possibly be able to disprove the allegation of *The Times* as to this letter, yet as, perhaps, he could do so only at the risk of being covered, himself and his party, with even greater infamy, he must at all hazards keep out of court. In result, however, it is matter of little moment to the public that he has failed to take up *The Times's* challenge: the point that impresses itself on the mind of discerning observers is that he feels his character to be so assailable that he dare not expose it to investigation in the searching light of a law court. He cannot be surprised if the natural inference be drawn respecting not only this letter, but the whole subject of the alleged connexion between “Parnellism and Crime.” The *Law Times*, commenting on the attempt of the Parnellites and their Gladstonian allies to smother the enquiry, says: “The cry of privilege raised by that infatuated paper, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, concerning the publication by *The Times* of the Parnell letter, is about as wild as anything lately published. To suggest that there is any analogy between this publication and that which alleged corruption against a committee of the House of Commons, is to show an absolute incapacity to reason logically. By no straining could the doctrine of privilege apply to the action of *The Times*. To make it apply it would be necessary to say that every member of the House must be protected from all reflections upon his character if his character has anything to do with any measure before the House—which would be absurd. There is singular confusion in the ideas of some speakers and journalists on the subject of the Parnell letter. If that letter is a forgery, its publication, and the remarks of *The Times* founded upon it, are grossly libellous. Very heavy damages would be awarded the plaintiff in an action. No action, it is said, is to be brought, but it is added, the public must not find a verdict against Mr. Parnell—so says the *Daily News*—because it would be to convict a prisoner without a trial. Mr. Parnell is not in the position of a prisoner against whom the prosecution has to prove a case. Mr. Parnell has to disprove a weighty charge deliberately made.

THE papers gave the other day an account of a school of plumbing that has lately been established in New York, from which most beneficial results are expected. There is no trade where technical education is so much needed, not exactly for the good of the trade, but for the good of the public. The health of every one of us depends largely on the care and skill of plumbers. If Life Insurance Companies would attend to the plumbing in the houses of their clients, their profits would be much greater, for the average of life would be measurably increased. Bad air shortens life more than probably any other cause; Life Insurance Companies ought to charge a higher fee for insuring the lives of people who live in ill-drained and ill-ventilated houses, just as Fire Insurance Companies charge a higher fee on hazardous risks. This ought—as nothing else seems able to do—to bring about a reform in house building, and attention to sewers as well as water pipes. In London, a Mr. Noel A. Humphreys has read a paper before the Statistical Society, in which he drew attention to the fact that in the Peabody Buildings, which now accommodate some 20,000 persons of the poorer classes, the number of infant deaths has been reduced seven per 1,000 below that of infants in London generally during the last five years. This shows, he said, how much housing has to do with the death rate, which is confirmed by the fact that the poorer classes who live much in the open air, like gardeners, nurserymen, and agricultural labourers, attain an average age almost as good as that of clergymen themselves, in spite of their much greater privations.