

IN ENGLAND.

Latest Thoughts on Trade Topics—
Will Mr. Balfour be Premier?

From the "Living World."

Speaking of Mr. Balfour remains us that, according to the statement of a contemporary, "the idea of making Mr. Balfour Premier of the next Government gives general satisfaction in the Unionist ranks. For Lord Salisbury to waive his claims, even in favor of his nephew, is an instance of self-sacrifice, indeed unseemly among statesmen. But Lord Salisbury is a man of great magnanimity, as well as penetrating discernment, and he sees that Mr. Balfour's attractive personality is the most important factor in modern politics. The masses understand persons better than principles, and Mr. Balfour excites enthusiasm even among his opponents. It was at one time thought that Mr. Chamberlain would be named to lead the House of Commons, but events have made such an arrangement impossible. The proposal to make the Duke of Devonshire Premier, which was started by a very great lady, and encouraged by Sir Henry James, has now been dropped." We have, of course, no objection to Mr. Balfour being made Premier; in fact, under existing circumstances, we should had the event with feelings of the liveliest satisfaction, but is it not at least "a little precocious" to speak of him as being Premier of the next Government? If we are to believe all that Sir Wilfrid Lawson and Mr. Cairne and their shrieking followers should have altogether overlooked the tremendous and overwhelming forces of the Victorians in the battle to be fought in the approaching General Election, the result of which will practically determine who will be Premier. Can it be because of the Trade victory and the rout of the teetotal braggers at Brigg?

SIR GEORGE CHESNEY AND "MR. PICKWICK."

Addressing his constituents at Oxford the other day, Sir George Chesney said that, compared with half a century ago, such a change had taken place in the social habits of the people in the direction of increased sobriety, and that such was now the abhorrence with which drunkenness was regarded, that Mr. Pickwick, with all his popularity, had he existed at the present day, would have been regarded as a "drunken old rascal." Fancy good, benevolent old Mr. Pickwick—the idol of generations past, present, and to come—being called a "drunken old rascal." It is enough to bring the shade of the immortal Dickens to earth to haunt the hon. member for Oxford, and the distinguished author of "The Battle of Dorking," for the remainder of his days. Nevertheless, the moral of the hon. member's remark is, as we have seen again and again insisted, perfectly true. The people of this country are yearly growing more sober, and drunkenness is rapidly diminishing. The report of the Commissioner of Police of the metropolis, issued on Saturday last, shows it most clearly. According to statistics therein furnished, it appears that in 1850 there were 23,897 persons apprehended in the metropolis for drunkenness and disorderly conduct. Their "mid-population" in that year was 2,518,460, the population being 9,489, whereas last year it was only 5,529. Where, then, is the

need for all the restrictive teetotal legislation with which we are so constantly threatened?

THE PUBLIC-HOUSE AND THE FUTURE.

Our attention has been drawn to a lecture recently given on public-house reform by the Rev. W. J. Lowenber, the Vicar of St. Peter's, Wury, in which the reverend gentleman, although he advocated the adoption of the Gothenburg system, dealt with the question of the continuance of licensed houses in a fair and unprejudiced manner. In the course of his remarks, he said that "in 1883 the Local Option Bill" introduced by Sir W. Harcourt, who gave two options, that of Prohibition and that of Sunday closing. Like Peter Pindar's razors, "not made to shave, but made to sell," it doubtless succeeded in its aim to sell, though it did not become law. But apart from its gross injustice, it would have been found quite unworkable in

fast and loose in such things. Honesty was always the best policy, and if we wanted a good thing we must pay for it."

MORAL RIGHT STRONGER THAN LEGAL RIGHT.

It was true that there was in many cases no absolute legal right, but moral right was a stronger thing than legal right; and there were still higher considerations. Moral reform must not be carried out by immoral measures. He hated "robbery for robbery offering." The public-house is, and will be for many a generation, the working man's club, and this fact ought to be recognized by all. In some form or other, the public-house is an essential feature in all civilized society. While I do not think any one class is to blame for the present condition of public-houses, neither magistrates, nor brewers, nor publicans; and while I believe that on the whole, and considering their great difficulties and temptations, the average

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practice, and the principle which underlay it had, since Mr. Gladstone's retirement from office, been described by him as "no more than a partial and occasional remedy. The mere limitation of numbers—the idyl of Parliament for the last twenty years—is, if referring to an imposture." Proposals for reform had hitherto been wrecked on the question of compensation, it being maintained that the license was only annual, not perpetual. But it was a point which was generally forgotten that beer-houses established before 1869 were perpetual licenses, which could not be refused, save on certain specific grounds. Were then the beer-houses established between 1850 and 1869 to be compensated, while the old established inns, many of which had been in existence for centuries, to receive no compensation? Prohibit duty, too, was always paid on an inn or a beer-shop as if it were a perpetual license, and honest Governments could not pay

publican does his work as fairly and as well as the man engaged in any other branch of the retail trade, the whole condition of the public-house wants reformation. It does not want destruction. English life wants brightening, elevating, and purifying at a point where it has hitherto been notoriously corrupt. Doubtless our air, especially in Lancashire, will alkalize, especially of French and German alto drinking of French and German alto and self-control as to be unable to keep sober unless all kinds of strong drink are carefully removed from the places where they enjoy social intercourse and take their pleasure. The public-house, as it is, but reformed and purified, has, not as it is, but reformed and purified, has, I believe, like the music-hall, a great future before it as a place of pleasant social intercourse and relaxation for mind and body."

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ANOTHER AWFUL WARNING.

We have often laughed together at the queer logic of our "temperance" contemporaries when they want to prove us that a man who drinks a glass of beer and was killed by lightning soon afterwards would have been alive to this day had he drunk lemonade. Just to show you that I am sometimes happy "I" other day about "I must tell you of a very sad case that happened within my own knowledge—even though it is really too grievous an affair to dwell upon at this festive season. It happened in this way. He drank very moderately, and had never been the slightest degree "tight." On Christmas Eve a friend asked him to come out and have a drink at an adjacent public house. But he refused, and sat down to the fireside to read. Suddenly a terrible thing happened. His house was a cheap one, and a slight breeze springing up was blown in on top of him, and the fellow was crushed to death. Had he gone out had that drink he would not be mourning him. It is one of the saddest cases of which I have ever heard—only shows the evils of refusing a drink when one is offered to you. I hope this warning. I am happy to say that one of our true story that he insisted on my going home with him and finishing a new bottle between us.

I hope that, in justice to us, the "temperance" journals, with that spirit of meanness which always—or nearly always—at least sometimes, or at any rate rarely, if ever—distinguishes them, quote this awful example of the duty of total abstinence.

A GOOD FIT.

Mrs. Carver—"I wonder why do men wear such frightfully big hats?"
Mr. Carver—"You wouldn't if you could once see the size of a drum-major's head."

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