

once united them, if England will only lay aside the notion that Russia is the incarnation of all evil and bring herself to view generously or even equitably her not unreasonable desire of a great and growing empire for access to an open sea. It is natural that freemen, as the English are, should hate despotism, without carefully considering whether it is the despotism of a usurper or that of a legitimate sovereign and rendered necessary by the present circumstances of a half-civilized and widely scattered population. It is natural perhaps that they should drink with eager ear the stories of Stepniak about Russian dungeons, though the Tartar is no more voracious in the dungeon than in the official bureau, and it is impossible to say how much of these hideous revelations is truth and how much is fiction. But misgovernment in a foreign nation is not a sufficient cause of war; nor is it likely to be cured, but rather to be aggravated, by increasing the ascendancy of the military spirit which is also that of arbitrary rule. The Jingoism of course are angry at missing an opportunity of going to the front and pouring out their hot blood in a crusade. The continental press is angry because, as the London *Spectator* too truly says, most continental journals are owned or edited by Jews. But those who are neither Jingoism nor Jews will rejoice that without loss of national honour, desertion of principle, or tame submission to the wrong-doer, a great calamity has been averted from England, the Empire and mankind.

It seems the Cable misinformed us about Lord Randolph Churchill's silly and offensive letter. The letter was directed not against Mr. Gladstone but against Lord Granville, who had incurred Lord Randolph's ire by a speech on the Russian question in the House of Lords. The confusion, however, is easily explained. The noble writer of the letter had about the same time brought on himself almost equal reprobation by a grossly personal attack on Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons. After quoting a description of Redschid Pasha as "a little, ferocious-looking, shrivelled, care-worn man, with a brow covered with wrinkles, and a countenance clouded with anxiety and thought," and as one who had been guilty of the blood of thousands "while he protested that the peace of the world was his only object and the happiness of mankind his only wish," Lord Randolph turned to the Treasury Bench and declared that there, in the person of the Prime Minister, sat the resuscitated Redschid Pasha. A man who said such a thing in a drawing-room would be kicked out of it, and a man who says it anywhere must be devoid of sense as well as of good manners. By his lordship's admirers it is pretended that these sallies are not outbursts of passion but strokes of deliberate policy, intended to attract public attention, and that they are imitations of the early manner of Disraeli. Supposing this whimsical theory to be true, how can a man prove his want of original genius more decisively than by servile and unseasonable imitation? In the political situation of England nothing is more dangerous and deplorable than the absence of a great Conservative leader to make that party perform its proper function in the State; and that the want may be speedily supplied must be the wish of every rational and patriotic Liberal almost as much as of the Conservatives themselves. But the idea that Lord Randolph Churchill is destined to fill the place can linger now only in the Music Halls, to the denizens of which impudence, smartness, volubility, and a violence of language congenial to their tipsy passions may seem identical with greatness. All theories of heredity would have signally failed if a national leader had come of the stock of Churchill. Lord Randolph's double escapade is, however, most timely, and may be the means of averting a great danger from the country. After this, the Morley-Parnell-Churchill combination can be successful only if the nation has sunk into such a depth of moral apathy and self-betrayal as to deserve humiliation and dismemberment.

In the revision of the French election law *scrutin de liste*, that is a general ticket for the whole department, has been finally adopted in place of *scrutin d'arrondissement*, or the system of one-member constituencies. For proposing to introduce *scrutin de liste*, Gambetta was hurled from power on the morrow of his advent to it; now he is dead his proposal is accepted. But when he lived the Chamber feared that he would have the making of the departmental tickets and that a dictatorship would be the result. What the party now in power fears is local influence, which makes itself felt in the one-member constituencies, and is generally Conservative. The object of the party in power is to impose its opinions on the nation, which it can best do through general tickets made up by a party organization. Such has been the tendency of almost all French parties from the Jacobins down to the present time; and the consequence has been that each of them in turn has parted company with the genuine convictions of the people and has exposed itself to a violent reaction. Local influence, so long as it is natural, and not, as under the old regime, artificially sustained

by privilege, is but the healthy action of the social tissue. Parochialism, the bugbear of centralizers, is almost a thing of the past. Popular education, the press and telegraph, have in all civilized communities carried the ideas of the great world into the hamlet and rendered an isolated existence impossible. The trickery of the wire-pullers on the other hand is by no means a thing of the past. The leading man of the locality is at least as likely as any political manager to guide the people to their real interest. But these are arguments to which French politicians never give ear. They are bent on making the world think aright, that is think with themselves, by force, and so *scrutin de liste* carries the day.

MR. THOMAS RITCHIE, President of the Belleville Board of Trade, has reprinted some letters which he addressed to the local press on the "Fallacy of Insolvency Laws," and of which he in vain attempted to procure insertion in the daily and commercial journals of the large cities even though he offered to pay advertising rates. The objection probably lay to his mode of treating the subject rather than to the opinions he expressed. Objections have before now been taken to the provisions of law which direct the equal distribution of the estates of insolvents, and Mr. Ritchie might have reinforced his own arguments by quoting the opinions of a late Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Lowe holds that the creditors of an insolvent are not entitled to an equal distribution of the assets, but that each is entitled to what he can get. It cannot be denied that each transaction had a separate origin and that each creditor expected that it would maintain its isolated character to the close. On the extreme doctrine of *laissez faire*, there is no reason why the legislature should interfere so long as no fraud is attempted, and with fraud the criminal law must be left to deal. It is also true that secured debts and preferences are sometimes innocent. All mortgage debts are specially secured and properly so, for if they were not the means of improving real estate would be wanting, as we see by the single exception which the Island of Jamaica presents of commercial preferences over mortgage debts. A preferential claim is not necessarily prejudicial and may under some circumstances be beneficial to non-secured creditors: a man's position may be such that he cannot further extend his credit without giving special security, and his commercial fate may depend upon his obtaining more goods. Still though the usual assertion of the right of each creditor to an equal share in the distribution of the assets of an insolvent estate be wanting in proof, it is better, on the whole, that the rule of equal distribution should be acted upon; and in these days when the tendency is to treat the property of a married woman as if it were the property of a single woman, the precautions against doubtful transactions need to be increased. That credit is often dispensed with too great facility Mr. Ritchie is correct in stating. The Americans are more careful than Canadians in this respect, and their terms of credit, when selling to foreigners, are much shorter than those which the English give. English creditors could protect themselves by adopting the American rule, but one effect would be greatly to curtail their transactions; and in the face of increasing competition this is a course which they are not likely to take.

THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

WHAT a painter, like any other artist or worker of any kind, most desires and respects is of course the judgment of a good professional critic. But he will not disdain an expression of opinion from one who, loving art but ignorant of its technicalities and pretending to no critical power, comes to an exhibition of paintings only to be pleased. After all, it is for the multitude, at least for the multitude of those whose taste is tolerably cultivated, that the artist works; not one in a thousand of those to whom he appeals can be a technical critic.

To one who went to be pleased, the Exhibition of the Royal Academy afforded a good deal of pleasure. Mr. Brymner's "A Wreath of Flowers," for instance, which caught the eye immediately on entering, with the group of children sitting on the brow of a hill above a seaside village, could hardly fail to charm; it is a picture which breeds happy thoughts, and which one would like to have in one's home. It has been noticed that the faces of the children are not so bright as they ought to be; perhaps the criticism is true, but the general effect of the picture is certainly happiness. Some perhaps may be a little repelled by a French manner which is on the brink of mannerism. For my part I enjoyed almost all Mr. Brymner's pictures, including "One Summer's Day," which has in it the same elements as his "Wreath of Flowers." He ought surely to bring a wreath of fame to his Canadian home. Mr. Lawson's "Village Green," with its perfect peacefulness and the calmness of the air indicated by the straight-rising smoke, was another picture in the same style on which I