

rebellion against his home government without interference, and raise money here to arm assassins and dynamite fiends. No one says him nay in this."

JAMES STEPHENS, late Fenian Head Centre, has an article in the current *Contemporary* on "Ireland and the Franchise Bill," in which he declares if that measure becomes law it will very sensibly increase the revolutionary vote throughout Ireland. As for Mr. Parnell, the Franchise Bill will bring parliamentary candidates to the front in Ireland with much extremer views, and he will have to give way to a "more advanced" leader. Even Mr. Biggar and Mr. Healey will be cast aside, the one as "an obstructive fossil," the other as "a mere moderate." Troublesome men will be sent to the House, with such revolutionary aims and aspirations as will eventually bring them to imprisonment in the Tower. This is a queer sort of patriotism, uttering slanders upon the Irish people that at any rate are not justified by the results of the Land Act. Fortunately Mr. Stephens is not likely to have such a following as he had befortimes, and moderate Irishmen know perfectly well that the House of Commons would soon devise means to put an effectual stop to excessive blather and treason. "England must make up her mind, after the passing of the Franchise Bill, to rule Ireland as a conquered province in a chronic state of siege." And England would not hesitate so to do if the unfortunate necessity arose, of choice between that and dismemberment. It is amusing to note that the late Fenian head-centre is much more concerned about Mr. Parnell's course than about the policy of the British Government. But there is no mistaking Mr. Stephens' programme: The bloody Sassenach is to be intimidated into granting separation; James Stephens is to be made president of an Irish Republic, and Ould Erin will be happy evermore! The paper is remarkable as indicating the utter inability of the writer to see any good that has been done by anybody for Ireland from O'Connell downwards.

MR. HERBERT SPENCER does not care to acknowledge that his theory of liberty has failed—that *laissez faire* means the destruction of the weaker by the stronger, and that it is the function of society to protect the helpless against tyranny, and especially against monopoly. He continues his argument in the *Contemporary* that government is founded upon aggression, and likens legislators to a chemist's assistant who purges for inflammation and kills his patient. He has obtained illustrations in every region, and he protests against interference in all. But he does not touch the real argument that monopoly is itself the defeat of freedom; and that it is only by interference that the State can get rid of monopoly. His sense of freedom is freedom of monopolies—only they will not be State monopolies. And if the theory be carried to its full, not only the chemist's assistant, but the properly qualified doctor, will be forbidden to administer medicine. "Let nature have its own course," Mr. Spencer would say, because the doctors sometimes make mistakes.

THE disgraceful Lord St. Leonards *esclandre* may eventuate in the British aristocracy being shorn of an ancient privilege. Though not, in the true sense of the term, a member of the aristocracy, the black-guard, unfortunately attached to that order, who has so sullied his manhood and his rank, claims to be tried by a jury of his peers. If this should be granted, whatever the verdict, the popular notion of justice would be shocked, and though the reports said to be cabled about such an act jeopardising the British aristocracy are pure nonsense, it might very well cause an outcry against such antiquated privileges. It is a sight for the gods to note how this miserable scandal has been made a party question by some Canadian organs! One would make it an additional reason for abolishing the hereditary Chamber; another sees in the House of Lords the quintessence of wit and intellect. It would be as reasonable to hold the journalistic world responsible for the extraordinary vagaries of these tin-plate knights-errant as to make the Upper House answerable for the depravities of one who is a member simply by virtue of being his father's son, and who has never been recognized other than as one of its necessary evils.

THE report that intimate friends of General Gordon are satisfied he is really in no danger, that there is perfect concord between the General and the Ministry, and that the success of his peculiar mission is assured, is a sufficient explanation, if true, of the attitude of Mr. Gladstone on the Egyptian question, and will prove unwelcome news to the Opposition, whose condemnation of the Government has been understood all through to be purely political and fictitious. Much more serious, as affecting the War Office, are the charges now formulated of gross irregularities and

rascalities in the transport and commissariat departments of the Anglo-Egyptian campaign of 1882. The reports must be taken with the usual pinch of salt, more especially as they come *via* New York; but it is unfortunately true that when anyone is to be killed abroad, the men sent to do it are largely left to their own resources, and there may prove to be some foundation for the scandal.

THE WYCLIF QUINCENTENARY.*

WHILE these lines are in the hands of the printer, English Protestants will be commemorating the work of Wyclif in London. Wyclif died on New Year's Eve, December 31, 1384; but that has not been thought a convenient day for an English gathering, and in consequence the 21st of May has been selected as the anniversary of an important event in the life of the reformer, and as occurring while many persons from all parts are assembled in the English metropolis. If Toronto, which celebrated the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of Luther in a worthy manner, should awake to the duty of commemorating the five hundredth anniversary of the death of Wyclif, there is still time to take measures for so doing.

Wyclif is certainly less known to his countrymen than he ought to be; and it is very difficult to convince those who have little time to study his life or his works, that he was a very great man and has been a great power in the world. It was not that he originated all, or most, of the ideas which have been most prominently connected with his name. That could be said of very few men. But he grasped the significance of those ideas with a new firmness, he appreciated their importance with a clearness superior to that shown by any of his predecessors, and he carried on the work of maintaining and defending them with a decision and a boldness which, for his time, was very remarkable, we might say, wonderful.

One great difficulty in the way of believing in the intellectual and moral greatness of Wyclif arises from the fact that he seemed to make but little impression upon the succeeding age. This notion, however, has been exaggerated, and it is not altogether difficult to account for the visible success of his work having been less than might have been expected.

It was not merely that printing was not yet invented, nor merely that Wyclif, as has been well suggested, had not clearly seen as Luther did, that an appeal could be made to the masses of the people only by the presentation of some positive doctrine, which, like that of Justification by Faith, could influence at once their consciences and their hearts. There were other reasons in Wyclif himself, and in the circumstances of the age which succeeded his own, which will help to account for this partial failure.

It would appear that Wyclif was somewhat lacking in those qualities of geniality and robustness which were so mighty a power in the case of Luther; perhaps, also, in some measure, of the later reformer's lion-like courage, although it seems quite untrue that he was timid, evasive, and ready to shrink from the consequences of his words. It is admitted by Wyclif's more ardent admirers that he was not distinguished by fervour or enthusiasm. His distinction was moral and intellectual, and those qualities come out in his writings, mingled at times with something of fierceness and indignation when he is stirred up to rebuke some superstitious doctrine or mischievous practice. At the same time, the influence which he possessed in the University of Oxford, which enabled him for a long time to keep the ecclesiastical authorities at bay, showed that he possessed no inconsiderable power of attraction. If a man who was teaching that which the Church of his age regarded as flat heresy could induce his university to bid defiance to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope, as he did, he must have had other qualities than his acknowledged blamelessness of life and pre-eminence of intellect.

But there were other causes operating to prevent the spread of Lollardism. Although for a time the reformer enjoyed the protection of John of Gaunt, it was this man's son who was to prove the most dangerous enemy to the disciples of Wyclif. The imperfect title of Henry IV. to the crown rendered necessary all the support he could obtain, and therefore he ingratiated himself with the clergy by persecuting the Reformers. The first bloody statute against heresy was passed in this reign. On the other hand, the risings of the peasantry were most unjustly attributed to Wyclif's teachings, and this aroused the resentment and suspicions of the nobles. It was among the middle class, the really English portion of the population, that the Wyclifite doctrines were held and cherished, and through all the miserable period of the French wars and the succeeding Wars of the Roses, there is

* The spelling of the reformer's name seems about as uncertain as that of our greatest dramatist. As two schools spell, respectively, Shakespeare and Shakspeare, so German critics spell Wiclif, and English Wyclif. It is not very important, but it seems quite impossible to decide between them.