

obstructive, and whose prominent personal characteristic is a total disregard of all Parliamentary decencies. Mr. Biggar's statement that Lord Spencer first devised Orange demonstrations in order that he might afterwards prohibit both them and Nationalist meetings is characteristic of this undesirable firebrand. Irish Lord-Lieutenants are not in the habit of looking for excuses to perform their duties. The member for Cavan's prophecy that "the Nationalists will hold their meeting at Newry, and it is safe to guarantee there will be no trouble" was immediately falsified; for the next cablegram brought news that "on the return of the Nationalists from the meeting they threw stones and broke the windows of the Orange Hall."

BARON ST. LEONARDS, the hereditary peer whose career has been so sharply ended, is not exactly in the heyday of youth. He is thirty-seven years of age. He is the grandson of a Lord Chancellor, is married, and has a daughter. His wife is a Dashwood, and belongs to the Dashwoods of Kirklington. His daughter is only six years of age. His sister-in-law is a daughter of Lord Hawarden. With all his advantages he has done nothing worthy of his name, nothing which justifies his rank. His grandfather, whom he succeeded in 1875, chose for his motto *Labore vincit*. Lord St. Leonards has not laboured, and the conquests he seeks have landed him in the box as a convicted misdemeanant. Truly the peerage is in an evil plight. It was Lord Euston the other day. Last month another heir to the peerage ganged his ain gait before he was twenty-one. And now Lord St. Leonards brings upon the aristocracy fresh degradation. It is no wonder that Mr. Chamberlain anticipates with confidence the struggle which will bring the hereditary branch of the Legislature before the tribunal of the country for its fate to be decided.

OSCAR WILDE, the apostle of marrowless "floppiness" and bilious art has once again rendered himself supremely ridiculous by writing—after five days' experience of matrimony!—a silly and thoroughly characteristic letter in which he says he is "not disappointed in married life." His undaunted spirit will, he feels confident, enable him to sustain its labours and its anxieties, and he sees in his new relations an opportunity of realizing a poetical conception which he has long entertained. He says that Lord Beaconsfield taught the Peers of England a new style of oratory, and similarly he intends to set an example of the pervading influence of art in matrimony. Surely the force of folly could no further go. And so the sun-flower worshipper who went up like a rocket has met the fate of all such pyrotechnics—has come down like a stick, and a very poor stick, too.

BALACLAVA seems likely in future years to be remarkable not only for the famous Light Cavalry charge, but as a fashionable resort for invalids. According to a report just issued by Vice-Consul Harford on the trade of Sebastopol, a medical commission which visited Balacava a short time ago has reported very favourably on its climate, and specially eulogised its sheltered position. An enterprising Frenchman has already resolved to utilise the sardine fishery, and has established large buildings. What is still more important as a factor for developing its resources, though not, we should have thought, as a place of fashionable resort, is that coal has been discovered in the neighbourhood. Consul Harford discusses in his report the derivation of the name of Balacava, which many historians have attributed to a corruption of Palakion, one of the fortresses said to have been built by the Seythian king of Scylurus; while others say that Bella Clava (fine port) is the real origin of the word.

A SINGULAR story of a salmon's persistent attachment comes from the the Fowey. Some time ago a gentleman, fishing with a trout fly, hooked and lost a salmon, which he judged to be about eight or nine pounds. A week later he came again with a friend, who used an artificial minnow; and the friend hooked in the same spot what was judged to be the same salmon. While he was playing it, another salmon, about sixteen pounds, joined the hooked one, and to all appearance made great efforts to release the captive by plunging on to the gut, &c. When the smaller fish appeared beaten and was hauled into shallow water the big friend followed, and the other gentleman, to prevent an accident, walked in, and with the greatest ease took it out with his landing net. He put an elastic band around it and took it to the next pool, where, after a few moments' hesitation, it sailed off. The editor of *The Field*, commenting on this says:—"The question of attachment in fishes is an open one, offering a wide range for the imagination. We have seen other fish, in sea and fresh water, follow a captive comrade in the same way as that described above. Their motive we never quite made out."

WITH the departure of the stately graces and formal politeness of the old school from Society went several social arts which have hardly been replaced by any modern accomplishments. To turn a compliment neatly, to hand a lady to her carriage, or assist her to mount her horse gracefully, to tell a good story, or to read well a poem to a roomful of cultivated listeners, are among the arts not lost, perhaps, but certainly mislaid, in these piping, active times of ours. It was considered essential in our grandfathers' days, that the young men should be taught these graceful nothings and arts of a polite education of a gentleman; and those of us who have had the good fortune to know a survivor of that well-bred generation, have been charmed, perhaps, with that ease of manner and courteous consideration for the feelings of others, which are as rare now as rich family heirlooms or real antiques. To rise a step higher; the art of conversation—how uncommon it is! How few men, even of abundant leisure, care to cultivate the talents required to make a good talker; to refine the voice and the manner of using it; to read discriminately; to polish the stock-in-trade of language, and add to it with taste and care. Verily, the telegraph and telephone are making of us mere automata, which jerk out certain syllables ad infinitum.

AN INTERREGNUM IN LITERATURE.

ATTENTION is beginning to be directed to the present-day dearth of original creative work in literature, and to the fact that while our great writers are passing away there are few, especially among the masters of fiction and of song, to fill with acceptance their vacant places. At successive periods we must, of course, naturally look for the ebb and flow of the literary tide, as the world is orphaned by the hushing of its melodious voices, and again sired by the coming of new aspirants for literary honour and historic fame. But while the natural order has sway, and the old yields to the new, the fresh material, it is held, is inferior in quality and lacks the vigour and power characteristic of that which it supplants. Even to the unreflecting reader of contemporary literature this fact is beginning to be realized—that while the area under cultivation is greater than ever, the literary harvests for years have been poor, and the indications for the near coming time are not rich in promise. There is ceaseless literary activity, and this in all departments of human thought; but its results are those of study and research rather than of original creative work. The *London Spectator*, referring recently to the present lull in English literary history, speaks of the attitude of the reading world of the time as "standing by to watch one of those intervals which divide literary periods, and give second-rate men their long-hoped-for chance." The journal goes on to remark that "the lull in the production of first-class fiction, and indeed of good literature generally, is very striking." "Nobody," it affirms, "gives us *enchaining* books,—above all, *enchaining* fictions." That this is true few who recognize the force of the adjective "*enchaining*" will gainsay. There is the usual quantum of entertaining, and often clever, novels, ingenious in plot, skilful in dialogue, and wonderfully, often painfully, elaborate in analysis of motive and character. But of books that "*enchain*," that fasten themselves on all the faculties of the mind, and leave a never-to-be-forgotten, never-escaped-from impress on the memory, there are notably few, and the sum of them will make but a small addition to the permanent literature of British fiction.

What is true of the eminent writers of fiction is also true of the great masters of song. The latter have passed, or are passing, away, and there are few to replace them who either move us by their genius or entrance us with their art. There are always the ninety and nine thousand, of course, who are forever twanging the lyric harp and affect to live apart from the soiling influences of a sordid world. But their harp-twangings are as mechanical as their lives are commonplace, and the divine art is enriched by little that is worthy of their would-be epic life. Even the art of political squibbing, someone reminds us, has disappeared; and our political literature in general, with not a little that claims to be religious, is far from allaying one's moral anxiety. Whatever poetry has done or is doing for the age, it only fitfully refreshes and but feebly inspires the world.

It would be untrue to say that there is little of the poetry of the time that is not marked by high excellence, though not perhaps by genius. There are writers of verse among the modern literary men of England, particularly of the critical school, whose literary faculty enables them with faultless art to construct a sonnet, or give soul and beauty to a lyric, as it enables them to write a literary monograph or a critical dissertation on some notable period of English prose. But the work wrought by minds gifted with that supreme endowment of nature which we call genius is in the present age rare, not alone in song, but in the great undertakings in prose such as have marked the path of English literary history for the past three