

African colonies have a vast preponderance of native population. The Australians alone are in the happy position of being completely masters in their own house, and of having no very near neighbours, and certainly none of whom they are afraid. The chief outcome of the Colonial Conference has been the establishment of a joint system of naval defence in the Australian seas, which is only a very small point actually gained when the amount of contributions required is considered. At the present time some of our chief colonies are either in doubt or opposed entirely to federation schemes; yet there can be no doubt that, even in the absence not only of strict federation but of general military agreement among the various portions of the Empire, England does nevertheless carry with her into European Councils much of the weight which comes from the possession of India and the Colonies. She cannot appear in Europe merely as Great Britain, or merely as the United Kingdom, but takes with her, wherever she goes, both the strength and the weakness that attach to her world-wide position.

There is one special source of national weakness to the United Kingdom and to the Empire, both military and general, which I ought to name, which is to be found in the condition of Ireland. If the Irish question were once settled, not only would England be able to take once more a better place in Europe, but lasting friendship would become possible between Great Britain and her chief daughter country. The Canadian fisheries troubles would not be found difficult of solution were it not for Irish discontent. Given the existence of this friendship, it would be to England a source of pride that the independent branch of her race which is seated in America, rapidly becoming as flourishing and as powerful as the whole of Europe, affords a pleasanter picture than that which Europe itself just now presents.

### MODERN ETCHING.

THE fashionable craze in London of late years has been etching, and as it has to a limited extent spread to Canada, some information on the art, which is obtained from the *Fortnightly*, may not prove unacceptable to our readers.

It is only twenty years since Mr. Philip Hamerton, writing in advocacy of the art of etching, endeavoured to find a reason for its unpopularity; to find the reason of its popularity would be the more appropriate task for the writer of to-day, especially as, with one or two exceptions, it is not the popularity of the great masters—it is rather the diffusion of work that is not individual. Great etching has been esteemed in limited circles—the circles of the instructed in this matter—for the last 200 years; in proof of which there has hardly been one generation during which the etchings of Rembrandt and of Claude have failed to increase in money value. Nor were they collected only as rarities by the millionaire and the curiosity-hunter; they were cherished intelligently by faithful admirers, of whom some, like the Chevalier de Claussin, were among the educated poor. The bulk, however, of modern etching which has acquired popularity appeals but little to the qualified students of Rembrandt and Claude, of Van Dyck and Hollar; but what it has secured is a measure of attention to the method of the art, which has obliged even the strictest and most orthodox of connoisseurs to admit that in the hands of gifted and peculiar men things have been done in our generation which they would hardly have held possible, and that even the legitimate province of the art has been confessedly extended by the increased attention bestowed by workers upon etching, not only from 1868 downwards, but since the first revival of the art by Meryon and Bracquemond, Jacquemart, Whistler, and Seymour Haden a dozen or a score of years before.

Of the etchers whose names we have just mentioned, each is individual, and more than one has wrought in fashions that were a surprise. To answer and refute the often not unreasonable doctrine that etching is sketching upon copper, comes Meryon, whom Mr. Haden in his comprehensiveness values, and of whom Mr. Whistler engagingly declares that he is not a great artist. Meryon, whom Mr. Haden describes accurately enough as "a great original engraver, whose work was not impulsive and spontaneous like etchers' work in general, but reflective and constructive, slow and laborious, and made up less of etching proper than of touchings and workings on the copper which do not admit of exact description."

Charles Meryon, thus variously estimated by the two most brilliant living etchers, was, as a matter of fact, the greatest nature that has expressed itself through etching since the days of Rembrandt. He is unlike almost every other great etcher in that it is upon his etchings alone that he must depend for fame. He was not a colourist, a defect of vision forbade him to be a painter. One great etcher of the past, and one alone, he resembled—Wenceslaus Hollar—by his devotion to a single art and by his deliberate and engraver-like method of working.

"His method," says Haden, "was this; first he made not a sketch, but a number of sketches, generally on vellum two or three inches square, of parts of his picture, which he then put together and arranged into an harmonious whole, which whole he first bit in, and then worked into completeness by the dry point and burin." What is singular as a proof of his concentrativeness is that the result has none of the artificial character usual to this kind of treatment, but that it is always broad and simple, and that the poetical motive is never lost sight of.

Whatever character for eccentricity Mr. Whistler may enjoy in the present, it is he who in the future will be voted by common consent to be that which experts in the matter declare him at this moment—the representative etcher of this generation, succeeding to Meryon's sceptre, but by what a different title! It is not a generation after all, but it is an appreciable number of years, that divides the two. Meryon's principal etchings

were executed in Paris between 1850 and 1854. He died in 1868. Before the first date there was some work in preparation; after the last there were some years of decay. The earliest etching by Mr. Whistler is of 1858, and, like all Meryon's work, was done in Paris; he was then a very young man. His latest ends with the record of a print executed in the summer of last year. Whistler's etchings number over 250, and while thirty years divide the first from the last, there have been intervals during which he has never handled his needle. Painting in oil, painting in water colour, drawing in pastels, lecturing to smart people, compiling neat pamphlets derisive of criticism, and contributing to newspapers have occupied him instead. In all the variety of his labour and pleasure, however, Mr. Whistler has never been untrue to his conception of art, and he has produced nothing that has not been replete with freshness of mind, nothing that was not keenly felt and beheld with penetration. Thus it is that every stroke is interesting. The effect of all etchings depends upon the printing, and Mr. Whistler has taken care that not a single impression shall go forth which does not fully satisfy him; from this precaution much of his success has resulted. On the whole, and even by original etchers, the work of printing is injuriously neglected.

Mr. Seymour Haden, though for years in extensive practice as a London surgeon, has been almost as prolific an etcher as Mr. Whistler. Sir W. Drake has catalogued one hundred and eighty-five of his plates, and he has been much more popular. If his style be less subtle and less elegant than that of Whistler, it is manly, vigorous, energetic, penetrating, and decisive. Mr. Haden is no mere amateur favourably circumstanced, and so producing something appreciably better than the ordinary amateur work; his sympathies have been with art, profoundly; half his gifts were in that direction, and he was wise enough to live for a while the life of an artist; these things account for the admirable qualities that lie open to notice in his etchings.

In whatever order and at whatever distance apart we may decide to place them, Whistler and Haden are the artists to whom the revived interest in etching, both in England and America, is chiefly due. Duveneck and Parrish, two of the most brilliant of the Americans, are distinctly their followers, and their followers in England are too many to name. But in England at least one other etcher has been influential with the younger men; this is Monsieur Legros, some of whose work was done before he came over to England, and long before he assumed the direction of the Slade School at University College. Like several other artists of a very high rank, M. Legros is a native of Dijon. His very cleverest follower is Mr. Strang. Legros has essayed chiefly landscape, and his landscape partakes of that of the early masters. He is a man of genius who has never attracted the public at large. He is also a belated old master.

Jules Jacquemart's work in etching is not wholly original; he is a link between the creator and the copyist, and his illustrations of fine objects of art and vertu are very perfect, as displayed by his etchings for the "Histoire de la Porcelaine" and in the "Gemmes et Joyaux de la Couronne." Mr. Ernest George and Mr. Axel Haig are understood to be in the enjoyment of a wide popularity, but we cannot consider them brilliant. Merits of a kind both these men have, like Mr. Farrer, who has carried skies much farther than they have generally been carried in etching, and Mr. David Law, with his finished pictures on the copper; both are original artists with tendencies of their own.

Among all the painters, perhaps, Mr. Herkomer may also be regarded as a proficient in the art of etching, and he is hardly among the permanent masters. Is Mr. Macbeth among them? He has individuality and power of interpretation, and is consequently more interesting than another skilled craftsman, like himself at the height of fashion, M. Walthez, who is a flexible, dexterous, various translator, and has worked triumphantly. In our own time alone artistic personalities, as different, nay in some cases as opposed, as those of Meryon and Whistler, Haden and Legros, Macbeth and Jacquemart, have been revealed to us in etching, and so the new individuality may find in etching the novel method of expression.

### AN AUSTRIAN STATESMAN ON MR. GLADSTONE AND HOME RULE.

INDEPENDENTLY of the demerits and dangers of Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule scheme, he has, to my mind, little or no excuse for introducing it, and the parallel he draws between it and the dual system I inaugurated is utterly fallacious. Agrarian agitation is the plea which he uses for giving the Irish people a separate Parliament. I believe that the agrarian system in Ireland has for centuries been a bad one, and the land legislation of 1881—whatever people may think of it from a moral point of view—will unquestionably bring about good results. But how these results are to be beneficially increased by giving Ireland a separate Parliament, and handing over its government to the avowed enemies of England, I cannot see, for one of its first acts would be to pass laws—virtually decrees of expulsion—against the landlords, to banish capital from the land, and materially to aggravate the general condition of the peasantry. As an old statesman I should consider that the establishment of an Irish Parliament, raising, as it unquestionably would, aspirations on the part of the people to free themselves from the English yoke, and increasing the power of political agitators, is fraught with the gravest danger to England. I cannot understand Mr. Gladstone quoting Austria-Hungary as an example, for, independently of the great dissimilarity between the two systems, Mr. Gladstone forgets the condition of Austria when the Hungarian Parliament was established. Austria had been beaten after a short, but most disastrous war; Prussia had forbidden her any further interference in German