

THE WEEK.

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SOCIETY AND POLITICS IN ENGLAND.

EVEN in the midst of all this political turmoil and anxiety, attention is diverted for a moment to the horrible ending of the hideous Dilke affair. It is true that the mode of investigation has been very unsatisfactory. A man who is accused of such a crime as taking the young wife of his friend to a house of assignation ought to be put on his defence like any other accused person, and represented by his own counsel. That it should be necessary to have recourse to so tortuous a proceeding as this intervention of the Queen's Proctor shows that there is a defect in the machinery of the law. Still, no one doubts the justice of the verdict, while, as to seduction of the foulest kind deliberate perjury is now added, the last end of this unhappy man is worse than the first. The affair is a public calamity, and it is the strangest thing of the kind on record. There have been many cases of men whose public character was high, while the violence of their sexual passions betrayed them into private immorality. Somers was one of these, and Castlereagh was another. But I do not remember an instance of a man whose public character was high, while in private he was not only immoral, but criminal and vile. Sir Charles Dilke's reputation for integrity as a statesman stood not less high, even among his opponents, than his reputation for ability; and his fall has filled society with amazement. The nearest parallel, perhaps, is the private history of Lord Palmerston; but then Palmerston's deviations from the right path were not confined to his private life. He falsified the Afghanistan despatches, and, as Lord Malmesbury's Diary shows, was not incapable of perfidy to colleagues. Lord Clanricarde, the disclosure of whose monstrous immorality shocked the world in his day as much as the Dilke case shocks it now, though guilty of no act of dishonour in public life, never stood anything like so high in public esteem as did Sir Charles Dilke. There are inscrutable mysteries and unfathomable abysses in human nature—that is all that can be said.

THE reproaches so often levelled against the people of the Mother Country for not taking more notice of the Colonies have always seemed to me unjust, as they certainly are somewhat undignified. How can we expect that people busied enough with their own affairs shall be always turning their attention to ours? But, if Colonists have ever fancied that there was a want of friendly feeling toward them, or of warm interest in their prosperity on the part of the people of the Mother Country, those who are now in England must have been pretty well undeceived. I do not see how a reception of the dearest kinsmen could have shown a more heartfelt recognition of the tie, or how greater pains could have been taken to evince interest and pay respect. The tribute is all the more significant from being paid when the British nation is, both on political and commercial grounds, distracted with the most painful anxiety on its own account, and its thought might be supposed to be entirely engrossed by its own affairs. I can assure you that a man who at a public meeting or dinner is introduced as a Canadian at once receives in that character as warm a welcome as English hearts and lungs can give.

It was to be expected that the Colonial Exhibition and the presence of Colonists here would galvanize into an appearance of life the movement in favour of Imperial Federation. I have too much sympathy with the moral objects of the movement—that is to say, the strengthening of the tie of affection between the Mother Country and the Colonies—to speak of the promoters otherwise than with respect. But, as I have often said before, it seems to me idle to discuss a mere aspiration when no definite or practical scheme has been brought before us. The addiction of my honoured and lamented friend, Mr. Forster, to this fancy, always surprised me, and I could only interpret it as a sort of Nemesis of the imagination of a man whose early days had been spent in unpoetic Quakerism. No man of mark, as far as I can learn, except Lord Rosebery, identifies himself with the movement. Colonial visitors and Governors of Colonies flatter the idea here, because they think it popular and wish to make themselves agreeable to their hosts; but they do not commit themselves to anything definite, and when they return to their Colonies they talk of the subject no more. The worst of it is that this vision of a world-wide Confederation helps to reconcile some people to proposals for breaking up the United Kingdom, which they fancy will be only making raw materials for the more magnificent union; so that, by a strange turn of events, the Colonial possessions of Great Britain are becoming indirectly instrumental in her national disintegration.

THE institution of the parcel post between Great Britain and the colonies, which is one consequence of this fraternization, may be a serious affair for the merchants of Toronto, inasmuch as it will enable Canadians to purchase freely at English stores, and thus expose the Canadian stores to a very formidable competition. I visited the other day the vast co-operative establishments of the Army and Navy. Goods of every description are supplied of the best quality and at the lowest prices. The establishment itself pays cash down for everything and sells only for ready money. It spends nothing in advertisements or in show of any kind. Its business is enormous, and its stock is at an immense premium. I do not see how other stores can, in the end, maintain themselves against it except by imitating its policy. For my own part, I am so bad a political economist that I prefer dealing, even at some disadvantage, with those among whom I live; but this is a personal weakness, on the general prevalence of which it would be rash for Toronto merchants to rely. They will have to consider their position, and I believe they will find that in paying cash themselves for their goods and in selling for ready money lies their best hope of salvation. Credit in Toronto is ruinously long.

WORKS of art, objects of taste, and curiosities in England still fetch long prices; and this looked like a proof that the wealth of the country had not been diminished, though particular interests might be suffering. But I am told that the buyers are largely Americans or foreigners, and that many treasures are now going out of the country. I have just been looking again at the Blenheim "Raphael" which was bought for £70,000 by the National Gallery, and have verified my impression that though its rank as a work of art is undeniable, it is not a very interesting picture. I should myself greatly prefer, as a companion, the picture which I used to see hanging on the same wall, of Rubens's second wife tripping down the steps of her home to the carriage which waits to take her to a party of pleasure. I could not help making the reflection at the same time that the British aristocracy, when they are at all pinched, part somewhat easily with their heirlooms. To economize a little in luxury or in plush would surely be more patrician.

London, July 24, 1886.

OWING to that subdivision of the great parties into sections, which is going on in England as it is everywhere else, the strict party and Cabinet system has, for the time at least, broken down, and is found incapable of giving the country a strong Executive Government at a moment at which a strong Executive Government is absolutely indispensable. This is the situation, and the obvious way of meeting it is to leave party distinctions in abeyance, to revert from the Cabinet system to something like the system of the Privy Council, and to form a strong Executive Government without any party limitation except fidelity to the Union. For this the country, the Unionist part of it at least, was thoroughly prepared, and a coalition between the Conservatives and the Unionist Liberals, with Lord