

The high duties are required to enable them to obtain prices only a little below those of foreign goods with the duties added. And permanent competition of the domestic manufacturers among themselves must be confined to this limit; they enter on a race from which their most formidable competitors are either excluded or only permitted to run with a ball on their feet. This is the competition which Sir Leonard boasts he has created, and which, to do him justice, he seems to have persuaded himself has brought cheapness out of high duties and local disadvantages in production.

In the absence of explanations, which the morning papers did not report, it is impossible to tell whether the increase of the tariff on "costume cloths, serges and winceys" implies a need for more revenue, or has protection for its motive. Possibly both these objects are aimed at. Certain it is that the margin of revenue over expenditure has become very narrow; and we cannot forever go on increasing the debt without danger of disaster. How far the tariff can be raised without producing a decrease of revenue Sir Leonard may be anxious by tentative efforts to discover; and it is not impossible that he may find the limit of the revenue-producing power some day when he least expects the unwelcome revelation.

THORPE MABLE.

### ENGLISH LETTER.

CHESTER, January 22, 1885.

SINCE the tidings from Zulu of the catastrophe at Isandana, and the isolation of Pearson and his gallant little force at Ekowe, no such anxious news has reached England as that of the end of last week. Happily the strain will not last so long. It was more than a month before any tidings whatever came from Zululand of the Buffs and their "bull dog" colonel, and to-day we are in daily telegraphic communication with Lord Wolseley and his lieutenants; but I begin to question whether the change is to be reckoned much of an advantage. At any rate then, if we got no news, we got no lies. Now yesterday, in the morning, came down a telegram that General Buller's force had met with a disaster at Abu Klea Wells, or on the march to Korti. For the whole day this was believed and not contradicted till late in the evening, when a vague notice was put up that the Government had heard nothing to justify such a rumour. Probably to-day there will be a positive contradiction, and to-morrow another scare. It is said, I know not with what truth, that these reports are spread for Stock Exchange purposes. But whether that be so, or they are only devices of journalists or the trade-mongers of newspapers, the mischief and cruelty of them is the same. There are near relatives of officers and men of the Royal Irish in this place, who were kept in an agony of suspense all Sunday about fathers, and husbands and brothers. It will soon become a serious question whether this kind of recklessness should not be made a criminal offence.

Apart from lying telegrams, however, the position is for the moment as anxious as can well be. Buller's own despatch shows that his small force of 1,800 is practically surrounded at Abu Klea Wells, not merely by Arabs, but by troops—probably the negro regiments who were in Khartoum with Gordon—who know the use of rifles and are already harassing his camp by a drooping fire from long ranges at a distance at which he can scarcely hope to strike them efficiently with his scanty cavalry and mounted infantry. The enemy must be in possession of ample stores of ammunition and arms of precision from the plunder of Khartoum, and Buller has a march of one hundred and fifty miles across the desert before he can rejoin Wolseley, while his retreat will no doubt encourage the Arab spearmen to try a rush once more on the squares, if any opening is given. It will be as brilliant a feat of arms as we have heard of in these times if the march is successfully accomplished; but the troops are picked men, the general as daring a captain as can be found in any army. So we may hope for the best. Long before this letter reaches you the march will be one of history, so I will waste no further space in speculation, though it is difficult to turn one's thoughts to anything else.

And there is little that is pleasant to turn to. The meeting of Parliament has disclosed as yet nothing but threatenings of bitter party fights in the nation's time of sore trial. This one could endure with more patience if the party fight were meant as a real trial for power; but it is scarcely possible to believe this. The motion in the House of Commons is studiously vague, and intended obviously as a means of discrediting and embarrassing the Government without any idea or hope of displacing or succeeding it. And the press, as a whole, is as bad as the politicians: loud-mouthed about the nation's honour while using every effort to humiliate and discredit those who have that honour in keeping for the time being. In a word, the only really bright spot in the whole business is the part the

great colonies have taken in this crisis. Of the Dominion I need not speak, as we have known of their readiness, nay eagerness, to come to the help of the Mother Country in past years. But on the part of the Australias it is a new departure, and has been taken at a time and in a manner which is in itself inspiring for the moment, and prophetic of even greater things in the near future. It is in spite, be it noted, of the curb which has been put upon their wishes and action in the South Pacific within the last year—in spite, in the case of Victoria, of the preposterous blundering of our Admiralty in telegraphing their ships of war to haul down the white flag, which most of us think they had good right to carry, within the last six months—that New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia are vying with each other in offers of military help in the Soudan. And not only are they ready to send ships and men, but to bear the cost of equipment and transit, and I believe all other costs, themselves. I cannot remember the arrival of more gratifying news in this country, and I was a man when we heard of the storming of the heights of the Alma.

We are probably on the eve of a long and trying war, which may well spread to Europe and Asia before we see the end of it. But wherever it spreads and however we fare in it, I for one have no doubt but that at the end we shall come out of it an united empire in a sense which few of the most sanguine of us would have dared to dream of a year ago. But I accept, Sir, your warning conveyed in a note to my last letter, that further discussion of this great question will at present be premature in your columns.

Returning to the point raised above, the melancholy deterioration of government by party, in this country at any rate, if not everywhere, one is specially struck just now by one of the results at which we have arrived. At this moment there are at any rate four men of Cabinet rank, and, I think, more trusted in the country at large than all but two of Mr. Gladstone's colleagues, who are outside this Government, and scarcely likely, as far as we can see, to return to office in a Liberal Party Ministry. I do not speak of Mr. Bright, who is a thorough party man, but of the Duke of Argyll and Lord Ripon in the Lords, and Mr. Forster and Mr. Goschen in the Commons. Now I have not the least doubt that several if not all of these would be in the Government even now if the best opinion and judgment of the country could be got at. I have equally little doubt that it is just what is most valuable in them as governing persons—their independence of thought and speech on different questions, and their firm grip of principles involved, which the average politician either cannot or will not see—that has kept them or driven them out of this Cabinet, and makes it less likely every day that they, or such as they, should belong to any future one. Indeed I begin, though with sorrow, to think that we are rapidly nearing a time when only opportunists will be possible as our rulers.

I remember years ago hearing one of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet say bluntly in a discussion, "My good sir, in our politics, in our time, no man can really do good or harm; so you had better play the game, and not stand out on fads," and I begin to think that that pernicious sentiment will prevail more and more in high places in the near future—with what results even what it assumes to be; it is founded no doubt on a counting of heads of a kind, but not even on a trustworthy counting of heads. For instance, to take either of the names given above; if English heads could be really counted all round *bona fide* I entertain no ghost of doubt that either of them would come out above almost every one of the present Cabinet. It is because we can't count heads fairly, but only the heads of one party, and that I fear by a constantly deteriorating process, that we seem to be in imminent danger of getting at the helm in the future only those who, like the very able and agreeable Privy Councillor above referred to, believe they can do neither good nor harm in the long run, and so will play the game, or in other words steer the course on which the wind seems likely best to fill their privateer sails. However, I am conscious of perhaps more exasperation just now—the fruit of lying telegrams and bogus notices of motion—than ought in fairness to be poured out upon innocent folks like your readers. Another month I hope may bring straighter news, and with it better temper.

THOMAS HUGHES.

A FACETIOUS gentleman, who has suffered, thinks the modern recipe for a party is the following: "Take all the ladies and gentlemen you can get, put them into a room with a small fire and stew them well; have ready a piano, a handful of prints and drawings, and throw them in from time to time as the mixture thickens; sweeten with politeness, and season with wit, if you have any; if not, flattery will do as well, and is very cheap; when all have stewed for an hour, add ices, jellies, cakes, lemonades and wines."