

OUR ENGLISH LETTER.

ALTHOUGH the defection of Lord Randolph Churchill has afforded another opportunity for inviting the Marquis of Hartington to join the Conservative Ministry, nobody is the least surprised that he has declined the offer. If any doubts on the subject existed at first they were speedily removed by the conduct of Mr. Chamberlain, who lost no time in publicly announcing that Lord Randolph's retirement made it possible for the Liberal Unionists to go great lengths toward coming to terms with the Gladstonians—in other words he saw a chance of forming a united Liberal party strong enough to beat the Conservatives, minus Lord R. Churchill; and he did not scruple to avail himself of the opening. Had Lord Hartington, therefore, taken a seat in the Tory Cabinet he would not have carried all the Unionists with him, and would certainly have left Mr. Chamberlain master of the situation. So long as Lord Hartington remains head of the Unionist party, Mr. Chamberlain has no choice but to follow him, and the Union is safe; but left to himself there is no telling what he might do; and there was never the least prospect of his joining any Government of which Lord Salisbury is a foremost member. By the time this letter reaches you some explanation may be forthcoming to put a better light on Lord R. Churchill's conduct; but at present the unanimous verdict of the Conservative party is that he has betrayed them out of sheer vanity or wilfulness. Among the Radicals an attempt is being made to claim him as a sincere financial reformer who has retired from office rather than sanction expenditure contrary to his principles. But as Radicals have always insisted that he never had any principles, the apology does not count for much. I suspect that it will be found that the Cabinet were embarrassed by his public utterances, and, being honest men themselves, preferred to throw him overboard rather than profit by his speeches while refusing to act on them. As a Chancellor of the Exchequer, he will not be missed; as leader of the House of Commons, his place can be filled; as an independent member, he is not to be feared; and, as a partner of Mr. Chamberlain, he would carry nobody with him. On the whole the prospects of the Disruptionists are not much improved by Lord Randolph's retirement from office.

As to the question of retrenchment on which he is supposed to have resigned, there will be no difficulty in convincing the country that the present is not an opportune moment for small economies. The conviction is pretty general that an European war is at hand, and that for England to be less prepared than usual would be not only dangerous to herself, but treason to the nations of Europe who desire peace. Without English help, material as well as moral, they must either let Russia and France do as they please or fight a losing battle. Besides, Russia has put herself entirely in the wrong, and England is not now in the humour to let Constantinople fall into the hands of the kidnappers of Prince Alexander. As to France, if ever England felt any genuine friendship for her—which is really very doubtful—the sentiment has entirely died away. France has lost all title to be respected through her fickleness and instability, and she has wantonly provoked our ill-will by deliberate acts of hostility. I don't mean that there is any warlike feeling in England against France, any more than against Russia. England is never warlike until she is in the midst of the fray. But I am certain of this, that if events should necessitate a war with France, the English people would enter upon it with a light heart, and a perhaps pardonable alacrity to pay off some recent scores.

ALL the world has been wondering why we have allowed the Colin Campbell divorce case to be reported at such length in the newspapers. The stereotyped excuse that the demand for such stuff creates the supply is quite inadequate, and would answer just as well for the brewer who salts his beer. The real reason—though it may be no excuse—was this: The case was interesting, just as a French novel is interesting; the conflict of evidence and the uncertainty of the result were matters which a reading public naturally took up with curiosity and zest. The dirt was a mere accident; but it happened that the very essence of the case turned upon some incidents which were unfit for publication, but which, nevertheless, were published because the weight of evidence could not have been correctly judged without them. Once take the public into confidence on such topics as these, you cannot withhold the most essential details, be they what they may. Moral: The public have no business with such confidences. The divorce court should wash its dirty linen on the premises. The English people do not wish to assist in the process; but if compelled to do so, it is only fair they should know exactly what they are doing. ANCHOR.

London, 1st January, 1887.

A MAN deep-wounded may feel too much pain
To feel much anger.—George Eliot.

SAUNTERINGS.

WHAT we need in Canada more than the readjustment of the tariff or the total extinction of the Catholic population, more than the defeat of the present Government or the victory of the present Opposition, more than annexation or independence or imperial federation or any amendment to the British North America Act—is a renaissance. We may be said to be suffering for a renaissance.

It is not that we do not know that strong north-west wind blowing from Thrace, that we have not, with the bees, gathered honey in the garden of Theocritus, that we have not watched, with his silent friends, the hemlock pass the lips of the hero of the Phædon, nor do we feel a desolating need of immediate Doric departures in our banks and court-house and legislative halls. The modern enclosure of banking, judicial, and legislative methods does not imperatively require, we all feel, a columnar dignity. Neither would we send our brothers of the brush indefinitely back to the classical point of faith in fauns and satyrs for their inspiration. It is not to any fraternity in letters, or in architecture, or in art existing among us that we should even remotely hint the regeneration of old principles and dust-hidden ideas. The implied reproach would be indignantly and justly resented. If one thing may be said to be more noticeable than another among any of these fraternities, it is the spirit of conservatism which, if it does not restrain them wholly within classic bounds, makes a mediæval approach to it that is very remarkable in these days of tumultuous progress. The envious, of the American Republic for instance, may gather and disseminate from this the impression that in the arts Canada is behindhand. This is manifestly untrue. We have simply not yet departed so far from the ways authorised by the traditions and practice of the past, as to feel the necessity of a renaissance.

It is we, the people, rather than those who minister unto our highest necessities, who stand direfully in need of a gracious quickening. It is we, the people, whose artistic perceptions and impulses have somehow been overcome by a binding lethargy—a somnolency that dreams happily of advances, and finds a horrid nightmare in a widening margin.

For we are the imported essence of British Philistinism, warranted to keep in any climate, and affording in our own proper persons a guarantee that it will increase in force and efficiency in this one. Any audacious attempt, indeed, to alter the compound by the intermixture of foreign elements is attended by such explosive circumstances as warn the intermeddler to beware, and persuade him to work out his social experiment under the more favourable conditions of Patagonia or Kamschatka. We may as well recognise this fact. Other people do, and not to see it is to give them reasonable inference for believing us blind, as well as halt. Yet we are the descendants and rightful heirs of a people who produced Shakespeare and Hogarth. We come from a land where the air is vibrant with greatness, a land where honour to achievement is hewn out of stone and set up in the midst of the people, a land that holds the "glorious glooms" and pulsing memories of Westminster Abbey! Therefore we should not be wholly irreclaimable. Therefore there should stir within us some germ of desire and endeavour responsive to the sun. Therefore against our stupidity the gods should not contend in vain.

BUT why this diatribe? you say. The fact is old. Some people date it 1867, others would have it contemporary with the death of Wolfe, yet in some manner consequent upon the defeat of Montcalm. It is quite a familiar fact. It has not been allowed to lapse into history. Why this recurrence to an unattractive theme?

In a measure Mr. J. F. Whistler, of London and Paris, is accountable for it, in a measure Mr. J. W. L. Forster, of Toronto. Mr. Whistler has been repeating, in his epigrammatic way, the somewhat well-established fact that "art happens," which sets one to wondering why it happens so infrequently in Canada.

Upon Canadian walls, gentlemen of the palette, I hasten to add, not in Canadian studios. And Mr. Forster has been giving, in a very clear and admirable paper, which the *Canada Methodist Magazine* somehow got possession of, his views upon the qualities of mind and heart necessary to art appreciation and criticism, which satisfy in a measure the spirit of speculation awakened by Mr. Whistler's epigram. Mr. Forster's article, as becometh the pen that is second to the brush as the vehicle of its owner's ideas, is purely theoretical. One is possessed, after reading it, of a pleasant ability to disprove the statement often made that an artist cannot write of the critical species of his own genus and not do so invidiously. The conditions under which the paper must have been written make this characteristic especially worthy of comment. Produced in Paris or London or even New York, its moderation would have been notable; in Toronto it