

menagerie. It is very largely composed of raw and apparently inferior, as well as discordant, elements. Soon it will be seen whether a factions and distracted crowd elected on the demagogic principle can form a deliberative assembly and govern the country.

Such, once more, is the party system. By faction the first of nations, after a thousand years of noble effort, has been brought to such a pass that it is put up to Dutch auction by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Randolph Churchill; while Messrs. Parnell, Healy, Sexton, and Biggar set their feet upon the Power which has coped with the world in arms.

GOLDWIN SMITH.

OUR ENGLISH LETTER.

BRITISH OPINION.

LONDON, November 20, 1885.

ALL other topics fade for the moment into insignificance by the side of the Parliamentary elections. I will, therefore, commence my letter with some observations on this subject, and even though the elections should be concluded before these remarks appear in print, I indulge the hope that at the worst a posthumous interest may attach to what I am about to say. As a Liberal whose lot is cast in a stratum of society that ranges from tolerably exalted circles to the region of villadom, I find that I occupy, politically speaking, a painfully isolated position. I seldom meet with a fellow-Liberal, and when I do meet with one it is no easy matter to extract from him a public and courageous confession of his faith. Nor is it only at the present crisis, when everyone is expected to exhibit a sharply defined creed, that I have been struck by this phenomenon; I have been aware of its existence during the last few years of comparatively tranquil political life. Speaking at a dinner given in Lord Rosebery's honour during the past week, Mr. Gladstone remarked that the preponderance of Peers opposed to the Liberal cause gave rise to serious reflection in his breast; and so I too feel considerable uneasiness at finding myself in a continual minority at dinner-tables and in drawing-rooms. From the days when Mr. Disraeli sought to discredit Mr. Gladstone's first administration by saying that the names of at least half the members of his Cabinet were not known in "society," down to the present time, the Liberal Party has been, and most undoubtedly still remains, the "Unfashionable Party."

These reflections cannot be wholly disregarded in any attempt to gauge the probable result of the approaching elections.

Readers of the *Spectator* of last week may take their choice between the Moderate and Immoderate views, as they are there laid down, and, in all probability, the calculations upon which the writer of these articles bases his views are to a certain extent reliable. But is the writer of the "Moderate and Immoderate View" aware of the hopeless minority in which day after day I, and such as I, find ourselves? And—sadder thought still—has he taken account of the havoc made by the advanced Radical creed among the ranks of those who have never hitherto bowed the knee to Baal, or laid their offerings upon a Tory altar?

Let me quote from the letters of three such men. The first one is a clergyman of the Established Church. He writes: "Chamberlain and his crew are fast turning me into a mouldy old Conservative." The second, a Scotchman, reports after a six weeks' holiday among his own kith and kin in the North of Scotland, that he is "fairly frightened by the violent language and the wildly destructive programme of the candidates and the supporters of the candidates in his electorate." The third writes as follows: "How are you feeling under this agony of agitation? What is to become of poor England—still more of our honoured Church? Such an outburst of burning and irrational socialism is most appalling. Are the souls of the majority of Englishmen revolutionized and irrationalized? We have a socialist candidate for O. For the first time I shall actually vote for a Conservative. That party has become, for the most part, truly Liberal. The Liberals have passed on to violent socialism—of all doctrines the most irrational and the most disastrous. What has done this? Not, I believe, actual wrongs, caused by our present constitution—there are such, but they are not the real parents of pure communism—but the penny press goading up unlimited cupidity on every side. It is the terrible tale of the French Revolution, only France had a pure despotism previously." I ventured to reply that for myself I relied with confidence on the calm common-sense of the English nation. My friend made answer as follows: "As a rule I cherish the same faith as you do in the good sense of the English people. Still, there will spring up at times ambitions, covetousnesses, jealousies, resentments—and those passions may easily, under circumstances, inflict blows on a constitution which has been the growth of ages, and irretrievably revolutionize its quality. But your calmness may be the more correct feeling than my uneasiness. I strongly hope that it is."

It is not improbable that the type of electors represented by my three correspondents will constitute a numerous class. Whether or no they will be overborne by the "unknown factor"—the newly enfranchised—remains an open question. The most skilful and energetic political campaigners speak with hesitation of the attitude of the agricultural labourer, and they do so with reason, for the agricultural labourer preserves a dogged and obstinate silence as to what he will do when he passes into the polling booth.

The "Church in danger" cry will undoubtedly exercise a strong, though it may only be a passive, influence on many electors, and there is a general feeling that Mr. Gladstone's exhortation not to make Disestablishment a test question comes too late. In a vast number of constituencies, indeed, Disestablishment has already been made a test question, and candidates have been selected mainly with reference to this article of the political creed. But I hope to write more fully on the Church question in another letter.

ALL right-thinking persons felt relieved when the "Stead case" came to an end. The propriety of the verdict is not questioned, nor, for the most part, is the pureness of Mr. Stead's motive disputed. There will, however, always be a strong divergence of opinion on the abstract question of the wisdom, from a philanthropic point of view, of Mr. Stead's action. Men competent to form a sound opinion do not hesitate to say that more good than harm will result from his revelations; and they point in support of their view to the list of subscribers to the "Stead Defence Fund," and ask if the men whose names are found there are not a sufficient guarantee for the goodness of Mr. Stead's cause. Others there are who attribute his action to vanity, to a desire for notoriety, and to similar base motives.

THE English public generally is puzzled to know why the Balkan States are tearing at each other's throats. The intricacies of race, and the many jarring elements which exist in these unhappy provinces, are very partially understood here. There is consequently a disposition to take a short cut to the solution of the problem, attributing the present lamentable struggle between Serbia and Bulgaria, first, to the innate greed and depravity of the two nations, and, next, to the hidden influence of Russia. Russia is pretty generally credited with a not wholly disinterested opposition to the formation of a strong Bulgaria.

Meantime English sympathy ranges itself—rightly or wrongly—on the side of the Bulgarians. There is no real foundation for charging the present Government with "Battenbergism," an accusation which was formulated against them in certain journals while the Conference was still sitting at Constantinople.

EXHIBITIONS of paintings form now as over a great attraction in London, and Canadians intending to visit this country may be glad to have a few notes under this heading.

ART AND THE DRAMA IN ENGLAND.

In Messrs. Tooth and Son's galleries the points of contrast and divergence between modern English and Continental Art may be well studied. Mr. McLean's exhibition in the Haymarket owes its chief strength to works by Italian masters. The collection of Carl Haag's water colours at the Goupil Gallery is a very large one, over two hundred works being exhibited, which extend in date of production over forty years. Great interest is manifested in the forthcoming collection of Sir John Millais's works, promised us by Sir Coutts Lindsay in the Grosvenor Gallery. Fortunate owners have responded very generously to his call, and a most comprehensive and powerful exhibition will be the result.

Of theatrical matters there is little to record. Melodrama reigns supreme at certain theatres, and "Human Nature," "Hoodman Blind," and the resuscitated "Colleen Bawn" attract good houses. There is, however, little that is artistic or worthy of remark about such productions, relying as they do on the scenic painter and stage carpenter's resources for their action.

"Mayfair," at the St. James's, has been the only "event" of the season, and Mr. Pinero can hardly be congratulated on his adaptation. For years, English managers and play wrights have steered clear of Sardou's "Maison Neuve," and their reticence is quite understandable; such thin ice would suffer from the moral glare of London footlights. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal make the most of the hopelessly vulgar characters Mr. Pinero has presented them with, and act like the true artists they are. The only sympathetic part, the warm-hearted old stock-broker, "Uncle Nick," is played with extreme cleverness, pathos, and breadth by Mr. Hare, who, indeed, went far to save the piece from failure the first night; but it is plain to see the play is not regarded with approval, and a long run cannot be predicted for it.

Gounod's new oratorio, "Mors et Vita," has been twice splendidly performed at the Albert Hall; the music is of a more romantic class than one usually associates religious themes with; his extraordinary wealth of orchestration is as marked as ever. Some of the solos were expressly