

or from wrecking any ship which has the misfortune to run upon it. Besides, the French peasant has, if not political, ecclesiastical leaders, who are by no means wanting either in ambitious ideas or in aggressive designs; and should the Jesuits become masters of the Church of Quebec, as everything at present indicates that they will, the influence of their guiding spirit will soon appear. Yet the progress of encroachment might be stayed, if it could not be reversed, and British and Protestant civilisation might be secured, were not the British and Protestant element torn by factions, whose reckless rivalry betrays it into the hands of a weak but united foe. People seem to have persuaded themselves that faction, which has ruined every other commonwealth, will be withheld by miracle from ruining ours. We shall learn in time, to our cost, that the supreme law is the same for all.

### THE ENGLISH CRISIS.

WHAT the precise state of things and the real outlook in England are we at this distance from the scene of action do not pretend to say, especially as it is manifest that the intelligence which comes through New York is made up to suit a Gladstonite and Irish market. But there can be no doubt as to the gravity of the crisis or as to the peril of the nation. Lord Salisbury has bravely faced the storm and reconstructed his Government. He will not suffer by the departure of Lord Iddesleigh from the Foreign Office, a post for which that respectable politician was quite unsuited; and though Lord Randolph Churchill will at once try to make his resentment felt, and will probably succeed in giving his late chief considerable annoyance, he has so far taken not a single member of the Government with him, and his enmity outside the Cabinet will, if boldly defied, be in reality less dangerous than his intrigue and treachery within it. But Lord Salisbury has not a majority in the House of Commons without the Liberal Unionists, and it remains to be seen whether Mr. Goschen will bring with him the support of a sufficient number of that section on general questions to enable the Government to stand. Lord Hartington's aid, however, seems to have been definitely promised in case of need; and, if it has, the pledge will be surely and fully redeemed. Mr. Gladstone watches the disorganisation of the Ministry with glistening eyes, and he is evidently elated with the hope of once more grasping power. He has eagerly opened negotiations with Mr. Chamberlain and the Radical Unionists. Mr. Chamberlain is, of course, unwilling to break with the party which he still hopes to lead, and he cannot refuse to go into conference. But if Mr. Gladstone adheres to his Irish policy, as we are told he does, it is difficult to see how a reconciliation can be effected. If the expedient of modifying the scheme so as to admit Irish members to the Parliament at Westminster on reserved questions could furnish means of a compromise, that device has been distinctly shown to be totally unworkable, as Mr. Chamberlain's keen intellect can hardly have failed to perceive. Besides, Mr. Parnell can consent to no reduction; if he did, he would at once be supplanted by more violent men; and without his contingent a Radical majority could not be obtained. The Salisbury Government is not strong; but it is the plank between the nation and dismemberment, perhaps between the nation and revolution. There is still, we are persuaded, in the country a large element of moderate and anti-revolutionary Liberalism, which, seeing what ruin impends, is willing simply to support the Queen's Government until this peril is overpast. To this element, as well as to positive Conservatism, Lord Salisbury's cabinet, with Mr. Goschen in it, may look for support if the selfish folly of extreme Tories will refrain from driving the ship upon the rocks. In the last extremity there must be another appeal to the country. If that fail, the game is up, and the book of British greatness may be closed.

LORD SALISBURY'S personal conduct in this disastrous and disgraceful crisis has redeemed English public life; and English public life has needed a good deal of redeeming. On the behaviour of Lord Randolph Churchill in betraying, at a moment of extreme diplomatic peril, the most dangerous secrets of the Cabinet for the purpose of damaging the Government which he has deserted, and in caballing against his late colleagues, no comment will seem needful to any man in whose heart honour has its seat. If his lordship had his due, he would be struck off the Privy Council. Not public life but society must be in an unsound state, if such conduct can pass unbranded. His lordship has evidently a personal friend in the *Times*, to which he irregularly made known his resignation, before it had been communicated to the Queen, and fear of his influence with the Tory Democracy seems to seal the lips of Conservative critics; though, if the nettle were boldly grasped it would hardly sting; since the heart of a mob seldom clings to its idol when once the idol has been cast down. Mr. Gladstone has, of course, bestowed on perfidy

the meed of his calamitous approbation. But Lord Randolph Churchill, though supreme, is not alone in his disgrace. His ignominy must be shared by those members of the Conservative party who are thwarting their leader in his effort to effect the indispensable reconstruction of his Government, because they fear to see office given to any one outside of the regular pale of their faction. That partisans, and partisans not of the meanest or most ignorant kind, should thus, in the extremity of national peril, think of nothing but their party pelf and their Shibboleth, is surely as striking a lesson on the tendencies of the party system as its advocates could desire. But in other quarters there appears, if not positive disregard of honour, at least a want of the high spirit of patriotism which such a crisis ought to call forth. Men like Lord Northbrook, when summoned by Lord Salisbury to his aid, instead of promptly obeying the summons, begin to consider what effect the acceptance of office will have upon their personal position, as though any man's personal position could possibly be injured by going to the front when he is called by the head of a nation in peril. In the breast of Lord Iddesleigh also, a selfish pique has prevailed over the voice of duty. Politicians have been enfeebled and demoralised by the evil influences of the game which they play, and by their nervous deference to what they take for public opinion. We cannot yet afford to lose out of our social and political system the bracing influence of the military character which, at all events, still presents the example of prompt and unquestioning obedience to the call of duty. Indeed the soundness of the army, about which we trust there is no doubt, and its loyalty to the Crown and the nation, are assuming, even in a political point of view, an importance which it might have been hoped they were not likely ever again to acquire.

### LETTER FROM ITALY.

IN my slight sketch of Milan an unpardonable oversight was the non-mention of by no means the least interesting and important of its treasures—the *Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, the neighbouring Piazza de' Mercanti, and Santa Maria delle Grazie. The famous library, with its wilderness of book-lined walls, was founded in 1609 by Federigo Borromeo,—a very grave and worthy receptacle for the precious documents that lie shivering, glass-cased and shelved in the silent halls: The *Codice Atlantico*, a collection of original drawings and MSS. of Leonardo da Vinci; a Virgil, with marginal notes by Petrarch; letters of Tasso, Galileo, and many others; and lastly, evincing more than all a spirit of hero-worship, the gloves Napoleon I. wore at Waterloo.

Fully to realise those inspiring scenes, replete with life and colour, so dear to the author of "Romola," the effervescence of a thousand hearts, the full play of the brute that is in us, one must have beheld the principal piazza of some Italian town, surrounded by palatial edifices, and with the oft-accompanying loggia, or open hall, built on to one of these latter. Picture such a "square" filled with gesticulating, shouting, chattering men—only that of the Mercanti to-day is but a modern "Exchange."

In spite of Mr. Mark Twain's opinion to the effect that he always found the surpassing worth of the copies; in spite of the ever-advancing work of destruction, Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece in the refectory of the suppressed monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie holds still all its marvellous power. As in painting, so in music and other arts—only those who have given serious hours to their study have a right to criticise. There is infinite absurdity therefore in demanding, or even expecting, anything other than a more or less worthless criticism from the hundred and one open-mouthed starers, to whom a potato is a pear if you call it such, and the difference between "La Mascotte" and "Lohengrin" appears about as mazy as their own sentiments in general. But "The Last Supper" is among the few compositions which, it seems, even the least skilled in matters artistic may, to a certain degree, appreciate; a ground where common and higher humanity can meet.

"Verona, a public place." Enter Sampson and Gregory. It is even so, and all the time one is strutting the Lyceum boards, or dodging some infuriated villain around the card-board houses of the Grand Opera. The picturesque, toga-like cloak, so popular among Italians of the middle and lower classes, though charming in daylight, has an aspect sinister and threatening enough at night, especially when its wearer moves swiftly and shadow-like through streets dimly lighted, narrow, and mysterious. There is an air very captivating about this unique little town. Its piazza and its palaces, its amphitheatre and its memories, must endear it to all. The vast arena, built A.D. 290, capable of seating twenty thousand spectators, and affording standing room to almost as many more, though much repaired, gives a perfect idea of similar structures of its time. But the Piazza delle Erbe is really the gem among the many attractions of Verona. It is