

## OUR ENGLISH LETTER.

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ALREADY the Christmas vacation is upon us, and the term almost at an end; nevertheless, it is agreed on all hands that the revival of business after the long vacation has been almost preternaturally slow. During the long vacation the stagnation was absolute. Ambitious juniors, willing to try what unfailing diligence would achieve in the way of winning the hearts of the solicitors, took nothing for their pains, and even men of greater standing who stayed in London during part of the vacation found that they had only wasted to no purpose a part of their much-needed holiday. Unquestionably the long vacation is a trying time for men who depend upon their profession for their subsistence, and there are few men who are not thoroughly weary of inactivity by the time that October has come. One objection to the long holiday lies not so much in itself as in its consequences. In other words, one would not complain bitterly if the legal machine was stopped for three months and then went on running as if nothing had happened. But the case is otherwise, since, after the long vacation, business is long before it ripens and regains a working or, so to speak, a lucrative condition. During this autumn and early winter, too, we have been beset by a series of *cause célèbres*, which, as all practical men know, are fatal to ordinary work, because they block the cause-list. There have been two—if two can form a series—and both of great interest.

First came the libel action against Lord Coleridge, of which it may be written that it was the very best thing, from Lord Coleridge's point of view, that could possibly have happened. Mr. Adams was beaten upon every point, and both the veteran Chief Justice and his son emerged from the trial with triumph, gaining the hearty sympathy not only of the profes-

sion, but also of the public. So offensive was the manner of the plaintiff, who had "a fool for his client," that the jury and the public were very near losing sight of the fact that something had happened which ought not to have been permitted. The late Lord Monkswell, it will be remembered, had consented to act as arbitrator, and to assess the damages in the original action brought by Mr. Adams. To that end there were sent to Lord Monkswell copies of all documents relating to the matter, and it was admitted that Lord Coleridge's solicitor's clerk sent a number of documents of which Mr. Adams had no knowledge. The jury found that this was an act of inadvertence, much to be regretted, on the part of the solicitor; but when one comes to reflect upon the matter in cold blood, at a time when the feeling of sympathy caused by the sight of the Chief Justice of England undergoing cruel and unnecessary torture has faded a little, it is not altogether easy to see how such a mistake could possibly have been made. It is true that Lord Monkswell wrote that the documents in question had not influenced his judgment; but then, how can a man tell, after arriving at a given conclusion, what has led him to it, and what has not? The case is not dissimilar to that of a jury who, having heard the answer to an inadmissible question, are told that they ought not to permit the words which they have heard to influence their judgment in the smallest degree.

Two good results may be expected from this great and lamentable case. We may anticipate, with some confidence, a reaction against the growing custom of giving extraordinary latitude to parties in person: coincidentally there is ground for hoping that the tendency may be in the other direction, and that judicial notice may be taken of that lamentable waste of public time and money, of which parties in person are the source. Secondly, it is