

withdrawal of the gallows, and the ghastly scenes of which it is the theatre, from the public gaze. The descendants of the people who could at one time look unmoved, or perhaps with an accompaniment of ghastly gibes, upon such spectacles as drawing and quartering, breaking on the wheel, and other forms of torture, and which sometimes thought it morally salutary to leave the body of the law's victim dangling for days or weeks in chains as an object-lesson for all passers-by, now deems it demoralizing that the public should even witness the penalties inflicted for public protection and warning. Hence comes the decree making executions no longer public spectacles, but operations performed within prison yards in the presence of none but specially admitted witnesses. It may be questioned whether the passage of the first law forbidding public executions—heartily as that enactment was approved by nearly all good citizens—was not really the beginning of the end of capital punishment. Once admit that the infliction of a certain penalty is too barbarous or painful to be witnessed by the public, or that its effect as a public spectacle would be demoralizing, and it may not be easy to stop short of the conclusion that what it is wrong or inexpedient for the people to witness, it may be wrong or inexpedient for the people to talk and think about. We do not say that such a conclusion is logically sound, but it is one towards which the mind seems to be almost irresistibly driven by the force of circumstances. One of these circumstances is the part taken by the public press, in these days, in portraying for the imagination all the horrible details, which it is deemed specially desirable to hide from the eye. How worse than useless it is to enact that a given execution shall take place within prison walls, and be witnessed only by a chosen few, when within a few hours every news sheet in the country will contain a minute description of the event, with every shocking detail exaggerated! A sense of this incongruity led to the attempt of the New York Legislature to deter the press from furnishing such details in regard to the deaths inflicted by the new process. Every reader who had access to the New York papers of last week can judge of the effectiveness of the prohibition. Evidently the problem of how to inflict capital punishment is still unsolved. Whether the time has come when human life can be effectually safe-guarded without the use of the death penalty, we do not undertake to say. The experience of those communities which have made the trial affords, we fear, too much reason to doubt it. But that events are rapidly tending to make all forms of execution impracticable is shown not only by the Kemmler experiment and the incidents connected with it, in the United States, but by the excitement of popular feeling which is now not infrequently aroused in connection with the use of the gallows in England. Such events may well lead us to doubt whether the objection is not really rather to the thing itself than to any particular form in which it may take place.

THE old saying that things are not always what they seem received a new illustration in a recent event in the British House of Commons. When Lord Salisbury brought down a Bill, committing Parliament to an approval in advance of the cession of Heligoland, it seemed at first thought as if the British Tory Premier had turned Democrat, at least for the nonce, and when Mr. Gladstone, Sir William Harcourt and Mr. John Morley went into the lobby to vote against such a Bill, it looked very much as if these eminent British Liberals were playing a Tory role, for the time being, in defence of the Royal prerogative. Indeed the action of the commoners on both sides shows that these were the views which actually prevailed with the majority. But a closer study of the situation puts an entirely different face upon the actions of the respective leaders. The real effect of the establishment of the precedent which the Heligoland Bill, had it been accepted without protest, would have created would have been not so much to impair the Royal prerogative as to give the House of Lords a power of veto in regard to international treaties. This is evident, since if such treaties had to be sanctioned by Parliament before taking effect, they would necessarily have to be sanctioned by both Houses of Parliament, and the rejection of such a Bill by the Lords would at any time be equivalent to at least a temporary rejection of the proposed treaty. The result would have become embarrassingly apparent on the first occasion on which a Liberal administration desired to make a treaty, whose objects or terms might fail to find favour with the majority in the Upper House. It was in view of such a contingency, no doubt, that Mr. Gladstone and his lieutenants

distinctly declared that they would not hold themselves bound by the precedent set up by the passage of the Bill in question. Hence, while it will be of course open for any future administration to follow the example set by Lord Salisbury, it is probable that in the future as in the past the treaty-making power will continue to be regarded as a prerogative of the Crown. This means that the Government in power must act on its own responsibility in such matters. While under such practice, the Government need not care particularly for the opinions of the House of Lords; it may always be relied on to ascertain beforehand, by such informal means as it knows well how to use, whether the measure is likely to meet the approval of the majority in the Commons, or the mass of electors, seeing that the penalty of failing to do so and govern itself accordingly is pretty sure to be an adverse vote in the House, with loss of office as its constitutional result.

IT would appear that the agitators are now doing their work with great thoroughness. They are everywhere, in the factory, in the workshop, at the docks, among the Post office officials, among the Police, in the Army. Is it possible that all of these have real grievances? The English *Daily Chronicle* speaks of the discontented condition of the English army being similar to that of the French army before the Revolution of 1789. We feel quite satisfied that such a remark would not have been found in that paper, if its own party had been in power, even if the condition of the army had been much worse than it is. And here is the misery of the situation, that our public men show so little of what we used to call patriotism. With all the faults of our forefathers, they did at least for a moment forget their party and political differences in the face of national emergencies; but now-a-days there are politicians not a few who seem to regard the real interests of the commonwealth as secondary to the dominance of their own party. Is it likely that the condition of the army is so very unsatisfactory, or rather, is it true that the common soldier is treated unjustly or unmercifully? Is he worse treated than he was? Is his case harder than that of the German soldier or the French soldier? In one respect, at least, it is better. He is free to enlist or not, as he pleases; and in these days the time of his necessary service, after enlisting, is not very protracted. Whether he is better off or worse off than other soldiers we cannot tell; but it is a matter of notoriety that the English army, in proportion to its size, costs immensely more than the German. Two things should be done. Some steps should be taken at once to ascertain whether the men are really suffering under any grievances; and if so, these should be redressed at once. But another thing is no less necessary that prompt steps should at once be taken to punish the agitators who are inciting the men to mutiny. If the men have grievances, they can represent them through their non-commissioned officers; and if these fail, then there are members of the House of Commons always ready to interrogate the Ministry on such subjects. But it is impossible to approve, or even for a moment to tolerate the undermining of the defences by which society is held together and maintained in existence.

IT is a strange commentary upon Women's Rights that the Post Office authorities in London, England, should have found it necessary to discharge a large number (we are not quite sure how many) of their female clerks. This will hardly seem surprising to those who have had to put up with the insolence of some of these young ladies. But it is not in London only that these young people, who are public servants, show their rudeness to their employers. Here in Toronto complaints are not infrequent, and we sincerely hope that the girls employed by the Post Office authorities in Toronto may learn a lesson from the punishment inflicted on their sisters in London, and mend their manners.

IF it be true, as reported, that a Chinese mob has torn up the short railway recently built in the Province of Chibli, by Li Hung Chang, on the belief that it was in some way responsible for the floods on the Peiho, it would appear that Western ideas have yet much to do before gaining a foothold in that part of China. The *New York Herald* compares the act with the burning of the improved spinning jennies in former days in England, or the hanging of witches in New England, as a means of averting calamity and placating the Almighty. It must be confessed that the superstition of the Chinese, much as we may wonder at or despise it, will bear the comparisons very well. To the unenlightened Oriental mind the fearful

power of the steam engine may well seem more appalling than spinning jenny or wrinkled grandam could possibly have done to those responsible for their destruction. When we think of it, though, it is probable that the burning of the spinning jennies was due rather to short-sighted ideas of political economy, than to superstition proper.

THE recent alleged miraculous healings at Ste. Anne de Beaupré have naturally aroused a good deal of remark and criticism, favourable and the reverse. The most famous examples of this kind of miracle in comparatively modern times are those connected with the Jansenist body in France, which caused such chagrin to their opponents the Jesuits, and which were so acutely criticized by Paley. Every remark of the able apologist on those phenomena is applicable to all the healings of the same class in later times, whether at the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes, or at Ste. Anne de Beaupré, whether they be known as miraculous cures, as faith cures, or as mind cures. They all belong to certain classes of disease, the cure of which can be accounted for by the action of the mind upon the nervous system. Moreover, they are entirely differentiated from the miraculous healings of the Gospel by the fact that they are connected with the supposed influence of some inanimate object, and not with the conscious purpose of an agent. Unless the reports of the Gospel are fundamentally false, the Son of Man exercised openly and consciously a power which He was willing to have tested. The so-called ecclesiastical miracles are of quite a different kind, taking place, as it were, accidentally, and affecting only certain classes of disease; and it is quite the same with the so-called faith cure. In fact, this last seems the most dangerous delusion; for its advocates set themselves against the employment of medical science, as though the calling in of a physician must involve the surrender of the faith. Happily, it is not very often that people carry out opinions of this kind logically and consistently; but a good deal of mischief may be done, and superstition dies hard.

AN important article in a recent number of the *Edinburgh Review* points out that the history of Roman Catholicism in the United States during the last two generations is most effectively expressed in figures. In 1830 there were nearly half a million Roman Catholics in a population of thirteen millions, or one in twenty-six. In 1850, swelled by the Irish immigration which followed the potato famine, they numbered three millions in a population of twenty-four millions, so that they were now one-eighth of the whole. But in the present year the lowest estimate of their numbers, which will shortly be declared by the census, is nine millions, the highest being twelve millions, so that we may say that roughly they comprise about one-sixth of the whole population of sixty-five millions. "The thirty missionaries of 1790 have, in 1890, as successors, more than eight thousand priests, working under the direction of fourteen archbishops, and seventy-three suffragans, while there are over two thousand seminarists of the youth of America training for holy orders in the Church." At the present moment the priesthood of the Roman Church in the States is drawn from every nation of Europe, a necessity of its conditions; but as the immigrants become, in their posterity at least, Americanized, a growing proportion of the clergy are of American birth; and these men have imbibed the sentiments of the country to which they belong, so that a very remarkable transformation is being undergone. The great leader of American Romanism, Cardinal Gibbons, induced the Holy See to revoke its condemnation of the Knights of Labour; and this alone might show the new attitude of the hierarchy to society. Nor do the leaders, like Manning and Gibbons, hesitate to declare that the Church has now to deal not with potentates, but with peoples. "The Church of America," says Cardinal Gibbons, "must be, of course, as Catholic as the Church of Jerusalem or of Rome; but as far as her garments assume colour from the local atmosphere, she must be American. Let no one dare paint her brow with foreign tint, or pin to her mantle foreign linings. . . . This is essentially the age of democracy. The days of princes and of feudal lords are gone. Woe to religion where this fact is not understood!" Such utterances may explain what otherwise would seem unintelligible, "that so large a portion of the American people should accept a spiritual government absolutely repugnant to their national character and their political institutions." We are sometimes told that the religious question which weighs so heavily upon us in Canada would be lifted if once we were united to the