

THE HILL OF ERROR

IT does occasionally happen that a man, a party, or a nation takes the wrong road. A man may return; but a party and a nation must proceed on their appointed way to destruction, since in politics the portentous words are especially true, that things are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be. Parties do not go wrong by conscious choice. Like the Pilgrim in a strange land, they mount the slow Hill of Error in ignorance of their changed destination, without suspecting that the gently rising pathway leads only to the brink of a precipice at whose base are strewn the remains of parties which "continue to this day unburied for an example to others to take heed how they clamber too far astray."

A party inevitably destroys itself. Otherwise it would destroy the nation, although occasionally it does succeed in the larger enterprise as well. At the last presidential election in the United States the Republican party carried precisely two states, because it took the wrong turning towards a higher tariff four years ago. Their predecessors, the Whigs, turned towards slavery, and perished in 1852, when Winfield Scott was defeated, and the very name which was in honour from the time of the Revolution became a term of reproach.

In England the Conservative party headed straight up the Hill of Error some ten years ago, under the guidance of a "business man" from Birmingham, and they are following in the precise path which led the Republicans of the United States to ruin. The false light came from over-seas. Colonial statesmen were called to their councils, as the saying now is, and they found it easy to advise when their advice was divorced from responsibility, and not dissociated from political self-interest. The Conservative leaders yielded to the arguments which were impressed upon them, and ac-