

shire, a coarse, clownish deer-stealer; an *inarticulate* man, who carried on no correspondences, had no friendships, and was unknown in the literary circles of London. Such assertions have been proved thoroughly worthless by the most learned and conscientious students of Shakespeare's life and times; but to call the man whose brilliant "wit-combats" with Ben Jonson at the Mermaid Tavern were remembered long after his death *inarticulate*, is such a curious infelicity of language, and so accurately indicates Mr. Donnelly's knowledge of his subject, that I may be excused for repeating rare Ben's well known testimony to Shakespeare's gifts of expression.

"He had," says his great contemporary and constant companion, "an excellent fantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary that he should be stopped: *sufflaminandus erat*, as Augustus said of Haterius."

It is a curious coincidence that just now when the conjunction of that erratic and dangerous political comet, Mr. Gladstone, with Mr. Parnell's baleful planet, threatens the unity and greatness of the British Empire, a new phase in what has been called "the Bacon movement," is being put prominently forward in a leading English literary review. I hope it is not an omen of England's decay, that while Mr. Parnell is openly receiving many thousands of dollars from the subjects of a foreign nation (no doubt with Mr. Gladstone's approval), to aid in the scheme of dismemberment, and Mr. Gladstone is dealing with Irish politics with the same reckless hardihood, imperfect knowledge, and arbitrary assumption, with which he writes about the Iliad and the Book of Genesis, a certain clique in America, assisted by some crack-brained people in England, are trying in various ways to soil and degrade the glorious name which for so many years has been the symbol of England's highest genius and noblest patriotism, and to make of it a stalking-horse on which they may exercise a puerile ingenuity. If there is one feeling which Shakespeare shows more strongly than another it is his patriotism. His loyalty to his sovereign and his country, his pride in the greatness and glory of England, speak with passionate power in the grand scene of the battle of Agincourt, and in all his historical plays. The Germans call these plays England's national epic. They are the noblest food on which the English race could be nurtured, and if they were more read and laid to heart, there would be more true patriots to uphold the honour of England. The name of Shakespeare has borne his country's fame over the world, and is a strong tie to hold the whole Anglo-Saxon race in a kindred bond. If it were possible that it could be thrown down and trampled in the mire, England would lose half her glory. Yet there are English iconoclasts who seem quite ready to assist the crazy faction that are trying to bring about such a downfall. There are also Englishmen who are willing to aid in destroying the power and prestige of the greatest empire the world has ever known, in the spirit of party, in blind obedience to an eloquent demagogue.

Stamford.

L. M.

THE WORK OF THE LATE CONGRESS.

THE forty-ninth Congress since the establishment of the Union, in 1788, came to an end yesterday, without any of the scenes of disorder and incidents of corruption that used to characterise such occasions a few years ago. The legislative result of its two years of existence has not been much in quantity, but it has done nothing really bad, and has passed a few good measures, of which the first in importance is the act regulating the counting of the Presidential vote by the two Houses of Congress. For want of such a law the country was brought measurably near to a civil war in 1876, and was filled with anxiety in 1884, when it was seen how close was the vote between Messrs. Cleveland and Blaine in the pivotal state of New York that year. Another important act is that regulating the Presidential succession in the event of the offices of President and Vice-President being contemporaneously vacant. More immediately important is the act repealing the Tenure of Office Act, passed during the administration of President Johnson, to protect those Republican office-holders who refused to "rat" with him from his party, and since used by Presidents, Senators, and office-seekers in aid of all sorts of corrupt bargains and traffics in public offices. By way of reaction from the policy under which empires of territory have been squandered in subsidies to railways, acts have been passed rescuing nearly fifty millions of acres from forfeited land-grants, and the quantity would have been much greater but for the strength possessed by land-grabbing corporations in the Senate. Reaction is further indicated by the law to prevent aliens from acquiring lands in the territories owned by the Federal Government, a blow at the Scotch Syndicates that have been making fraudulent use of the laws intended for actual settlers to acquire vast cattle ranges on the plains. An apparently effective blow has been struck at the polygamous arrangements of the Mormon Church, though time will be needed to see full and actual results. A start has been made in the direction of freeing Congressional Committees from the labour and scandal of investigating private claims against the Government, by sending such cases to the Courts for judicial proceedings.

Moderate provision has been made for continuing the restoration of the almost vanished navy, and it is gratifying, in this connection, to know that the millions upon millions recklessly voted by the Senate under the spur of a newspaper craze for national defences—a rage stimulated by a syndicate of people interested in supplying the Government with material—were withheld by the House. Another reckless measure that failed was the Canadian Retaliation Bill, promoted by the House for purposes of buncombe, and which the promoters knew could never have any practical consequences. The more moderate Senate bill on the same subject became law, but will probably find no other use than as a stick for the Republicans to belabour the President with, as the shadow of the next general election draws nearer.

Having regard to the social life of the country, the act to regulate the trunk-line railways is of the first importance, but rather as a matter of intention than performance; for many additions and changes will be needed before much practical control of the great lines of commerce can be exercised. The indications are that this act is the beginning of a series that will, in the end, put the railways and the public on a just footing toward each other, to the benefit of both.

The extension of the system of free delivery and collection of letters to all towns having not less than ten thousand inhabitants will promote the comfort and convenience of the people materially. The relief of American ships from a multitude of small imposts and other burdens must lead, in the end, to an act allowing our citizens to buy ships wheresoever they can do so with the greatest advantage. Another step forward has been taken in the civilisation of the Indians, by providing for an allotment of their lands among them in severalty, and protecting their titles against their own improvidence for a long term of years.

The most serious omissions of the expired Congress have been the failure to revise the oppressive tariff on imports; to stop the debasement of the currency by the depreciated silver dollar, and to grant to the mercantile classes a National Bankruptcy Act. The scandals of the sessions have been the reckless granting of pensions for alleged merit or disability in the Civil War, and the corrupt combinations by which the public treasury has been plundered to erect useless Federal buildings all over the country, and to improve rivers and harbours that have but an apocryphal existence. On many of such jobs and swindles the President, by means of the veto power, has set a heavy foot.

As the days of the Congress drew toward their end there was an increasing disposition on the part of Democratic members to harmonise with the Administration. This is partly due to recently-acquired wisdom and partly to fear. The Administration, on its side, is a little more plausible, and a slow but steady attenuation of the Civil Service Reform goes on, to the grief of the independent supporters of President Cleveland.

The general tendency and experience of all modern legislative bodies is recounted in the following words of the New York *Herald*: "More bills were introduced in both Houses, more Committee reports made, more bills passed, more became laws and more were vetoed than ever before."

Washington.

"THE PITY OF IT."

WE are standing in the face of a terrible crisis in Ireland, in spite of all that Lord Randolph Churchill has prophesied to the contrary. It is not a political crisis; it is not a social crisis, though both these have helped to create it. It is a financial crisis. Whether Home Rule be granted or not, whether the Plan of Campaign be successful or not, a vast number of Irish tenants will be ruined this year. It is the natural outcome of a legislation which has rewarded idleness and perjury; of an agitation which has directly recommended them. Almost the whole of English legislation upon Irish land questions since 1881 has been a direct incitement to look poor, to show debts, and to swear that "the rents are impossible." The farmer who owed arrears had them wiped off; the farmer who showed his land full of weeds and rushes had his rent reduced; the farmer who had set his land for crops of flax, and so ruined it for years, was relieved and commiserated; while the honest man who did his best, and paid his rent on the adjoining farm, got nothing. These plain hints given by English legislation have been improved upon by Irish agitation. The former only rewarded lying and idling; while the latter plainly recommends them. It is of the last moment to the sordid patriots who are sucking the life-blood of the Irish peasant, that his destitution shall be signal and his rent proved impossible. The people have been openly and deliberately taught that agitation will pay them better than agriculture, and that an ostentatious poverty is the sure road to wealth and comfort. The result is that in the poorer districts Irish farming has gone to ruin. All the zealous and constant care which the honest farmer bestows upon his land is now regarded as mere folly. What use is there in getting up early, in sowing and planting betimes, in watching the weather, in keeping down the weeds? If men appear comfortable and thriving in their farms, will not agitation decay, and the National League die a natural death? Accordingly, the Irish peasant has been really dragged down into terrible poverty, not by paying rent, but by being trained in idleness, lying, and false sentiment. He is taught to attribute all his wrongs, real and imaginary, to somebody else. He is told that he can become rich and happy by legislation and not by labour. If this be so, what matter is it whether this or that law be proposed for his good? If he got Home Rule to-morrow would that help him out of his difficulty? If a great foreign war brought with it a sudden rise of prices, will the man who has neither crop nor stock on his land profit by it? This is the terrible future which is before us. A generation of men, however well disposed and quiet, who have been systematically urged both by empty bombast and solid bribe to idle and to throw the blame of their poverty on some one else, will not be untaught these lessons without terrible distress and suffering. There will be despair, and with it crime, the natural consequence of despair. There will be more expatriation and expropriation than was ever dreamt of by any legislator. But the real blame will rest not upon the landlords, however their foolish harshness and still more foolish weakness may have produced occasional harm, but upon the blunderers and the plunderers, the English legislators and the Irish agitators, who have assiduously and only too successfully taught a social and pleasure-loving people that idleness is no harm, and that labour is mere vanity and vexation of spirit. What laws can save a people who fall into this terrible snare?—J. P. Mahaffy, in the Dublin "Union."