

The Passing Show.

BY WILFRID WISGAST.

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players."

The extraordinary expression of sympathy with the Royal family by all classes of the English people is evidently one of those ebullitions of loyalty to the principle of monarchy that are very unpalatable to a certain class of people in the United States, and to judge from the comments of some of the papers printed across the lines shows a condition of things quite incomprehensible to them.

It is impossible for Yankee writers to deny the depth and sincerity of the love of people in Britain for the sovereign and her family, so lately they have ceased the ignorant and sneering comments which have for so long disgraced even some of the best journals published in the States whenever reference used to be made to the subject. They now say nothing, which if they cannot be commonly civil is about the best course to pursue.

The truth is the American people have for a long time blown their own trumpet with such persistency that many of them have come to believe that their country is, as they call it, "God's country," and the finest country on earth; it then follows that the Yankees as a people are the salt of the earth, and that their system of government is the best yet devised.

To a people like the Yankees who, with all their good points, are a very vain and super-sensitive people, it is an unpalatable truth to be convinced of, that almost any government in Europe—except of course Russia—is much more pure in its administration of justice, more amenable to public opinion, conducted more nearly to the idea "by the people for the people," and beyond question much more honest and economical in expenditure, than is the government of the United States.

This knowledge is coming home to our neighbors across the lines; and it is not at all unnatural that such a lesson should be one many of them are loth to learn. After playing at spread eagleism for over half a century, and asking all the world to come and see how grand was the system inaugurated by the great Republic of the land of the setting sun, it is annoying to have to acknowledge that for administrative capacity and honesty the United States of America have much to learn from the *effete* monarchies of Europe.

Nevertheless this in substance is what some of the leading journals in the United States have now the courage to confess. They need not be at all ashamed of such a confession, because we can all learn of each other. In fact, the older one becomes and the more one moves about the world the broader our views inevitably become, and we find that from all people everywhere there is something to be learned.

I have noticed for some years past a change for the better has been making rapid progress all

through the journals of the States. I remember when the *New York Herald* on one occasion gave half a column of head-lines to a Fenian meeting, and one of them was literally as follows:—"We Tell Those Cursed Saxon Swine This Irish Land Is Ours." I have seen nothing to equal this for a long time.

The remarks made lately by the papers across the lines in reference to the death of the Duke of Clarence have been a strong proof of what I say. They have been courteous without any approach to sycophancy; and yet dignified and conceived in a spirit of cosmopolitan common sense.

The only discordant note so far in connection with the bereavement of the Royal family has, strange to say, come from the Transvaal. Now there is no more loyal portion of the whole of Her Majesty Queen Victoria's broad domain than in the Transvaal. Some of the first friends of my youth are there as barristers and journalists, and I quite know what I am talking about in this connection.

As an Englishman, as a loyal subject of the Queen, as a member of the Primrose League, and as a Tory Democrat, the information given in a despatch from Johannesburg, Transvaal, stating that great excitement was caused there on Saturday last by the action of an editor of a paper published in that place caused me a considerable amount of satisfaction. In an article on the death of the Duke of Clarence and Avondale the editor took occasion to make an attack upon the character of the Duke. The man was driven out of a theatre by the angry people and was compelled to flee for his life. The newspaper building was stoned and all the windows were broken.

Bravo, my British friends! This incident recalls something that I witnessed many years ago, which was indelibly impressed on my memory because I was only then a little boy—quite a "nice little boy" my fair young lady cousins used to say. It was not long after the historic *coup d'etat*; my father and mother then resided in the island of Jersey, off the west coast of France. Napoleon III. and Empress Eugenie had been visiting Queen Victoria, and had been right royally received not only by England's Queen but by England's people.

Well, Jersey was at this time full of Parisian journalists—the "mind of France" they called themselves; but youngster as I was it struck me that the "blackguardism of France" would have been a more appropriate name. My father, though an English gentleman of means, was decidedly Bohemian in his tastes, and many of these exiles were frequent visitors at our house, and among them I remember especially Victor Hugo, Louis Blanc, Felix Pyat, and I believe Ledru Rollin.

The French refugees in Jersey were incensed beyond bearing by the reception of Louis Napoleon and his wife by Queen Victoria. Victor Hugo and his friends were publishing a little sheet called *L'Homme*. On this sheet appeared a bitter article containing the sentence, "that Queen Victoria had, by receiving Louis Napoleon as her guest, sacrificed her dignity as a Queen, and her virtue as a woman."

That sentence did the business. The cry went forth of "An insult to the Queen." The little paper had scarcely left the press a couple of hours when a public meeting was called in St. Heliers, the office of the paper was attacked, the printing material scattered in the street, and the building set on fire. And within twenty-four hours every foreigner known to be connected with *L'Homme*, with Count Victor Hugo at their head, was escorted on board the steamer by the authorities and banished from the island.

This is a little bit of ancient history which was recalled to my notice by the plucky action of the people in the Transvaal, and it also brought to my mind an incident which occurred in Toronto not long ago when Sir John Macdonald called attention at the Academy of Music to some disgraceful facts. Then the Yankee organ here, the *Globe*—the organ too, of Riel and of Mercier—had to fetch the police to guard their office.

There was no attack contemplated, because it was no revelation to anyone here that the *Globe* was the kept organ of annexation. But the feeling at the Academy was so strong that the manager of the *Globe* became frightened, and fearing that the gilt would be knocked off his recently renovated edifice, he called the police.

From the little island of Jersey to the Transvaal, and from the Transvaal to Toronto, the distances are considerable indeed, but it is satisfactory to see that the same sound feeling of loyalty animates Britishers everywhere, as does also the same supreme contempt for traitors of whatever degree.

Now I do not wish to be misunderstood. Loyalist as I am and Tory as I am proud to be, I have no fault to find with any fellow who has the courage to avow himself an annexationist and an anti-Britisher. It is a difference of opinion, nothing more. But I cannot stand those people who are trying to run with the hare while they hunt with the hounds, who dare not say what they mean, and are only trimming until they can decide on which side of the fence it may appear to be judicious to alight.

I do not wish my readers to imagine that I consider "Jimmy" Muldoon to be worth a paragraph in "The Passing Show," but the story of his easy escape from the officer of justice while on a train suggests some enquiry. I know "Jimmy" very well, and I should like to know how much he paid the officer to allow him to escape.

I should not have mentioned this matter but that at about the same hour of the same day that "Jimmy" was making a break for liberty in Buffalo, another prisoner in another part of the continent, escaped by leaping off a train going at the speed of forty miles an hour.

These occurrences are not infrequent on this continent. But the obvious suggestion is, why are these people allowed the chance to escape? A pair of handcuffs will stop any inclination a gentleman may have to indulge in athletic exercises on a swiftly moving train. Of course, if the escape is a pre arranged affair—as undoubtedly it is more often than not—well then, if Canadian or United States courts tolerate such "escapes," we need not be surprised that there is throughout this continent but little respect for the law and its administrators.