

counter to the opinions (*sic*) of Lord Randolph Churchill and other hair-brained Machiavels, the veteran statesman and his supporters have bartered the honour of Britain, are disloyal, are in the pay of the foreigner. Such *ad captandum* claptrap, however, deceives none but the shallowest of those who use it.

FROM men like Lord Salisbury, however, better things might be expected. A Tory of the Tories, and a prominent leader of a class doomed to lose much of the power so long and so unjustly wielded by it, he still ought to be above the pettinesses of the unthinking Tory mob. He has had opportunities, during his connection with journalism, of educating himself in the realities of politics—opportunities not enjoyed by many of his brother aristocrats. Yet we find him telling a Welsh audience the other day that all Liberals are infidels. Lord Salisbury must have been hard put to it when he fell back upon so gratuitous and untruthful an assertion. A well-known writer immediately pointed out that not only was Lord Salisbury abusive, but inconsistent. In another speech delivered within a few days of the one referred to, he had complained of the religious tone of Mr. Gladstone's Midlothian speeches, and had spoken in a generally sneering manner of religion. Moreover, there is a certain Mr. Balfour, of whom Mancunians have an intimate acquaintance, whose views, to say the least of it, are not orthodox—and Mr. Balfour has the honour of a blood relationship with the "master of flouts and gibes." It is questionable, also, whether Lord Salisbury would have been guilty of his indiscretion at Welshpool if he had remembered the cases of Hobbes, Bolingbroke, Hume and Gibbon, all of whom have served England well, and each being an archetype of infidelity. Neither Mr. Huxley nor Mr. Tyndall have ever spoken so foolishly about religion; but then those gentlemen are much too logical to suppose that they are the embodiment of human wisdom or of loyalty.

APROPOS of the exceeding nonsense continually published—even by Tory journals in England—about our Indian "frontier," it may be interesting to point out that skilled opinion is very much divided upon the question. It has been a favourite doctrine amongst many military strategists in India that the dependency should be secured somewhere beyond its own frontier. This is why the oasis of Herat and the Valley of the Murghab are at this moment the subjects of diplomatic contention. Russia's steady march southward in Asia has been inevitable from its beginning. No one ever dreamt that the imperial eagles would halt except in presence of an impassable bulwark. Where this bulwark was to be found constantly occupied the attention of Indian commanders and statesmen, and the majority inclined to the opinion that it ought to be placed so as to turn Afghanistan into a strong buffer. Sir Peter Lumsden is one of the lesser number who believed that the actual frontier of India itself is the only secure, natural, and common-sense line of defence. So thinks Mr. Archibald Forbes, and he has stated his case in an article of characteristic force and ability. We have had the choice before us of leaving the Afghans to deal with the Russians, or of making cause with the Afghans and going to Herat to contend with the invader in the region of Turkestan. The latter plan has apparently been preferred. But Mr. Forbes says he is in favour of the former, for several reasons. In the first place, no foreign force, whatever its object, can march through Afghanistan without encountering rancorous and relentless opposition. In the second place, "Afghanistan is a country unfruitful in supplies for the maintenance of armies." In the third place there are only four defiles giving access to India, and all are commanded by powerful strategic works. In the fourth place, these military obstacles would be greatly increased by the fact that during the whole route through Afghanistan the advancing columns would be perpetually worried, harassed, and thinned by the indomitable natives. Instead of allowing the Russian to go through this melancholy experience, and remaining at our true base for his final reception, we have apparently decided to incur it ourselves. Although Mr. Forbes holds no post in the army, he is an unquestionable military authority, a close student of strategy, an intelligent observer of the greatest of our modern wars, and perfectly familiar with Afghanistan and the Indian frontier.

MR. LABOUCHERE is credited with having invented two good phrases of late. "Reading the London newspapers," he writes, "I have felt inclined to doubt whether journalists were not, speaking generally, as pernicious to a well-organized community as mad dogs." (This apropos of sensational reports.) Speaking of the debatable land between Russia and Afghanistan he says: "It is a meatless bone, which has only acquired a fictitious importance because two dogs are snarling round it."

AFTER the sentimental argument, one chief ground of opposition to cremation has been that it would destroy evidence of foul play where death had resulted from such means. Sir Spencer Wells, in the course of an address at the Parkes Museum, London, the other day replied to this objection so far as it applied to the society he is connected with. He assured his hearers that the Cremation Society had formulated conditions, to which applicants must comply, of so stringent a character as to prevent the possibility of any person who had come to his death foully being cremated. No person who had poisoned a relative would assuredly apply for one of their certificates, or submit to the conditions which they imposed. Indeed at the Milan Crematorium, the fact of a child having been poisoned, which otherwise would have escaped notice, was actually brought to light by the preliminaries which were there insisted upon, though in that case the poisoning turned out to have been purely accidental.

In this connection the following lines, to the writer of which a London weekly awarded a prize "for the best Twelve Lines of Original Verse on Cremation," may prove of interest:—

Though our atmosphere is laden with the germs of fell disease,  
And the black, polluted river wafts its poison on the breeze;  
Though the filth of slum and alley spreads contagion far and wide,  
Still we look upon cremation as a horror—from our side.

Yet within our very city graveyards fester and decay,  
Where our pale and pany children pluck the buttercups and stray;  
And at times some "jerry" builder desecrates the grassy bed,  
Casting to the winds of heaven ashes of the sacred dead.

But the time is not far distant when this question we must face—  
Life and health will be the problem for the growing populace;  
For the custom now prevailing like its followers must die,  
And the urn will claim our ashes, closed for aye to mortal eye.

In a communication addressed to the Paris *Charivari*, M. Charles Levilly gives some amusing details of the methods employed to make Madame Patti's American tour a financial success. At San Francisco, on Patti's arrival, an auctioneer was employed to put up for auction, not the reserved places, but the right to choose reserved places. The auctioneer, duly installed in the theatre with gigantic plans of the building, was engaged during the whole day in putting up to competition the right to choose a place. To be allowed to take part in the bidding it was necessary to take seats for the whole engagement, extending over a fortnight. The right of choosing the best places generally fetched about \$30, which added to the price of the place, about \$45, made a total of \$75. Poor places were sold at a premium of about \$1, so that even for the privilege of getting the worst seats something had to be given in addition to the advertised price. The correspondent adds that the bidding was lively in the extreme, and that the auctioneer did his work with so much spirit and address that the public quite enjoyed being fleeced.

HAM FAIR, which is just over in Paris, is one of those curious fêtes in which the lively Gaul revels. Although it is held in one of the dirtiest quarters of the French capital, the well-to-do drive thither in their carriages, freely mingling with all that is low and coarse, and freakishly crowding into the innumerable shows, where they test the solidity of fat women's limbs by the sense of touch, or laugh at the antics of mountebanks on a rough stage. It pleases them also to buy a two-sou sausage and carry it home as a memento of the fair, which, as may be imagined, is not altogether a source of innocent or refined amusement. Out of the hundreds of booths, a few are devoted to the sale of ham in various disguises. The Arles sausage, we read, continues an indispensable feature, although its component parts are admittedly a mystery more impossible of solution than our own succulent skins of "linked sweetness long drawn out."

ENGLISH papers just to hand poke much fun at Lord Tennyson's poem on the reported insufficiency of the British fleet. One journalist says it is "deliciously like a caricature of himself"; another calls it "an attempt to be melodramatically indignant." He can hardly get his words out. "You—you!" he stutters to Lord Northbrook, and then as though not quite sure of his premises he comes along with an array of "ifs." If (and the "if" is emphasized too) "they have failed to understand," that the fleet of England is her all in all, "If that Old England fall which Nelson left so great," on Lord Northbrook and his friends "will come the curse of all the land." This, laughs one critic, is the first time in literature that a curse was conjured by two "ifs" founded upon a "report."

You—you—who had the ordering of her Fleet.  
If you have only compassed her disgrace,  
When all men starve, the wild mob's million feet  
Will kick you from your place;  
But then—too late, too late.

Poor Lord Northbrook. What an enormous kick! It would be bad enough, as an irreverent correspondent says, to be by 999,999 feet, but a million is surely one too many. A contributor to the *Liverpool Mercury* concludes a merciless criticism of the Laureate's latest as follows:—

You—you—if you have failed to understand  
That England thought you knew the poet's trick,  
On you now comes the laughter of the land  
For that mysterious kick  
Which falls too late—too late.

Poet of perfect diction highly wrought,  
Poet whom England loved in every sea,  
Poor Baron, what shall million kicks be dought,  
And what avails the ancient fame of thee  
Whom once we called "the Great"?

You—you—who had the ear of all the world,  
If you can compass only pathos, see!  
When all men laugh, a million lips are curled,  
To send a jeer at thee,  
Our laughed-at Laureate!

YET another scoffer, "Dagonet," of the *Referee*, thus unbosoms himself: "Alfred, my dear Alfred—and in the *Times*, too! 'The Fleet'—is it a joke? Did you intend it for *Punch* and drop it into the wrong letter-box? You, a peer, a hereditary legislator—and you talk about 'the wild mob's million feet' kicking the Government from its place! It is the funniest poem you have ever written. You were not nearly so comic even when you stood on a tower in the wet." The same writer also contributes the following parody:—