

THE last report of the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States sets in a very clear light the suicidal character of the policy which forbids registration to foreign-built vessels. After pointing out that the foreign commerce carried in vessels of the United States has steadily declined from seventy-five per cent. in 1856 to less than fourteen per cent. in 1887, and that of this small percentage less than one-half was carried in steam vessels bearing the flag of the Union, the report proceeds: "A citizen of the United States may buy a foreign-built vessel in a foreign port; he may put the United States flag upon it and trade with all the countries of the world except his own. Our Government will protect him with all its power in such trade; but if he brings his ship with our flag upon it to one of our ports, our Government will confiscate it or impose prohibitory duties. He may, however, put the flag of any other country on that same ship and bring it to his home without molestation by our Government; it is then protected by the power of a foreign country." It is certainly difficult to understand why it would not be advantageous to the Republic to so change its navigation laws as to allow foreign-built ships owned by its citizens to come and go between it and foreign countries while bearing the flag of the country of their owners. The primary object of the law forbidding American citizens from importing and naturalizing foreign-built vessels was to compel them to build them at home. But this it has signally failed to do. The question now seems to be, not, as an exchange puts it, whether the making of ships is more useful than the possession and use of them, but whether, since it is found impracticable to make them, it is wise to determine that they shall not be possessed and used for purposes of home and foreign commerce.

It is perhaps only what might have been expected, that the opposition to the Local Government Bill in the British Commons should gather strength as the Bill is more closely scrutinized in its principles and details. The mastery of a document so formidable in its length and the multiplicity of its clauses is a work of time. The lengthening lists of amendments, already counting up into the hundreds, of which notice has been given, foreshadows a prolonged contest before the details are finally settled. The main features of the Bill are, no doubt, as good as accepted. It is noticeable that the strongest objections are directed not so much against what the Bill contains, as against what it does not contain. One of the chief defects with which it is charged is its refusal to entrust the City Councils with the administration of the Poor Laws. Other features to which much exception is taken are its provision for "Selected Councillors," or aldermen; and its requiring the whole council to vacate their seats together every third year, instead of having them gradually renewed and continuity of policy secured by the retirement of one-third of the number each year. The temperance party, too, are determinedly hostile to the clause compelling the councils to compensate the publicans whose licenses they may cancel. This Sir Wilfrid Lawson declares is fining a district for the offence of trying to make itself pure, though to more dispassionate minds it seems but the dictate of the simplest justice.

PERHAPS the most philosophical criticism of the Bill, though it was by no means the most telling—the House of Commons not being a body of philosophers—was that of Mr. Leonard Courtney. Mr. Courtney will be remembered as the man who relinquished office in 1884 rather than support a Redistribution Bill which ignored the principle of proportional representation in Parliament. He now regards the absence of some provision for the representation of minorities as a radical defect in the Local Government Bill. The system of single-member constituencies will, he contends, cause the minority, no matter how large in every constituency, to be left entirely unrepresented. As a result not only will the council in no case represent the county as a whole but only the majorities in the several districts, but it is, moreover, conceivable that the minority in the county may have a majority in the council. This might occur in a case in which the majority party in the council have won all their seats by close votes, while the minority may represent constituencies that gave them a nearly solid vote. Substantially the same criticism was, it will be remembered, made by Mr. Blake some years ago, in reference to our mode of electing representatives to Parliament. Sir Richard Cartwright also, but the other day, presented some statistics in the House, which place this defect in the working of the system in a very striking light, showing as they do that the party which has a majority of some fifty members in Parliament received in the aggregate but 5,000 or 6,000 more votes than the Opposition, and that by a change of one-third of one per cent. the proportionate strength of the two parties might have been reversed. It is evident that our representative system is yet very far from being either philosophical or ideally democratic.

THE uncertainties of the European situation seem to be increasing rather than diminishing. The rupture of diplomatic relations between Greece and Turkey has brought in a new element of complication. To the onlooker, noting from a distance the persistent intrigues carried on under Russian influence to bring about disturbances in Bulgaria and Roumania, it would seem to indicate that the long-predicted convulsion is inevitable, and its outbreak simply a question of time. The unmistakable tension of feeling in Austria points to the same conclusion. On the other hand, Prince Bismarck, whose opportunities for taking in the whole situation are probably unequalled, and whose position makes him in a manner the arbiter in all European disputes, is represented as sanguine that peace will not be broken. It is possible that his knowledge of the insufficiency of Russia's preparations may give warrant and confidence to his opinions, or it may be that he has some inscrutable objects in view that are best promoted by maintaining his characteristic attitude of imperturbability. It is very likely that if Russia can manage by any course of diplomacy and intrigue to have her chestnuts pulled from the fire by some other means she will prefer to avoid the tremendous risks of a great war. But that she will ever conclude, save under constraint of the direst necessity, to abandon her cherished objects, and especially to leave Ferdinand in peaceful possession of the Bulgarian throne, is incredible. To relinquish a purpose once formed and attempted, would be to break the historical record of the most pertinacious of monarchies.

A SCORE of years ago the exploits of the *Monitor*, an experimental war-craft designed and built in the United States, drew the attention of the maritime world, and did much to inaugurate the revolution which has since been wrought in the construction and equipment of navies. Another experimental vessel, the *Vesuvius*, was launched the other day from the American Navy Yard, which bids fair to attract no less attention, and, should opportunity occur, to outdo the feats of its short-lived predecessor. The two chief novelties in regard to the *Vesuvius* are the high rate of speed anticipated, twenty knots an hour, and the unique character of her offensive armament. The latter is to consist of three guns, each fifty-four feet in length, and adapted to throw a dynamite shell of two hundred pounds weight a distance of one mile with precision. If this can be accomplished, and the dynamite cartridge made to explode on striking, it is evident that no ironclad could withstand the shock. Whether, however, the long range guns, now so much in vogue in naval warfare, would leave the little slumbering volcano many chances of coming within striking range of its intended victim is one of the uncertainties of the experiment.

THE fatalities which have lately resulted both in the United States and in Canada from contact with electric light wires show the necessity of prompt and stringent legislation to protect the public from this new source of danger. If, as is insinuated in some quarters, the danger is chiefly caused by the use of an unreliable insulating material, because of its cheapness, it is time the fact were known. Certainly a strict enquiry should be had in every case of serious injury or loss of life, in order that the facts may be clearly set forth, and the authorities and the public enabled to judge whether and to what extent the catastrophe was due to negligence or other preventible cause. It may be going too far to say, as the *New York Herald* does, that in every case "somebody is guilty of murder, and should be held responsible therefor," but there is certainly sufficient room for suspicion to warrant the strictest investigation. It is not so clear that the remedy proposed by the *Herald* and others—putting the wires underground—would afford the desired security, since it would still be necessary for employees to have access to them at certain points, and employees seem hitherto to have supplied most of the victims. But there is little doubt that science and money combined can solve the problem, and both should be used freely and without delay.

THE action of a Committee of Harvard's Board of Overseers in recommending the abolition of intercollegiate competitive sports, so far as Harvard undergraduates are concerned, has called forth a good deal of surprised and deprecatory criticism. The Committee are probably right. There can be no doubt that the influence of such contests is decidedly hostile to the higher objects of college life. The tendency of the time to convert field sports into a regular profession, and to transform what should be friendly trials of skill and muscle not only into life and death struggles for money and fame, but into nurseries of vice and gambling, cannot fail to be demoralizing. The young men at our colleges and universities should set better examples and cherish higher ambitions. The fancied benefits to health and physique are worse than illusory. The contests are taken part