

OUR MELBOURNE LETTER.

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

MELBOURNE, 10th December 1879.

The great Reform Bill has been snuffed out. The Government were defeated on the measure last Thursday night, as they failed to obtain the statutory majority in accordance with the Constitution Act. There was intense excitement during the evening. The discussion was not on the motion for the third reading of the Bill, but on Mr. Munro's amendment to substitute an elective chamber, based on a £10 ratepayer franchise, for the nominee Upper House proposed by the Government. Mr. Munro spoke with authority, as he had just tested the popularity of the question (Mr. Berry's only standard of fitness in legislation). Some three weeks since, at a noisy meeting at Carlton, called by Mr. Munro for the discussion of the Reform Bill, he did not get a fair hearing though in his own constituency. The meeting was packed by Government supporters. Next day he resigned his seat, offered himself for re-election and was returned by a sweeping majority. Mr. Munro argued that his return was a condemnation of nomineeism, and advised the Ministry to expunge it from their measure. The Premier, who is wont to talk of "the great heart of the people," "their grand intelligence," etc., took a new rôle on this occasion. He admitted that if the electors were asked "are you in favour of nomineeism?" they would say "no"; "but this," added Mr. Berry "is the foolish prejudices of the masses." "Politicians should not yield to prejudice but, should instruct the masses." Just before the division an extraordinary scene took place. Mr. Tytherleigh, member for Normandy, who was perfectly intoxicated, made his appearance surrounded by a contingent of Government supporters led by Major Smith. As Mr. Tytherleigh had proclaimed his intention of voting for the Opposition Messrs. Bent and Gaunson went to claim him, but were resisted by brute force by Sir Bryan O'Loghlen and the Major. At this half-a-dozen Opposition members rushed across to assist Messrs. Bent and Gaunson. Matters began to look very serious indeed and a free fight appeared imminent over the prostrate body of Mr. Tytherleigh when Mr. Bent and his followers retreated from the combat, and Mr. Tytherleigh was literally carried across the floor of the House and propped up on the Government benches, where he sat with his fingers to his nose making what the boys call a "lunar" at his former friends. In spite of Mr. Tytherleigh's abduction, and the fact that Mr. Lyell and Mr. Purves, Oppositionists were absent from the colony the Government had only a majority of five. This defeat placed the Government in an awkward position, and various were the rumours next day as to what they were going to do. Resignation was talked of, but our present rulers are not the men to resign. I think they will rather act like the man who was found by the guard travelling without a ticket in the train, and was kicked out. At the next station the guard found the man in another carriage and again forcibly ejected him. Station after station this game was carried on until the guard grew angry and exclaimed, "I say, my man, how long is this game going to last?" "Till the end of my journey, Sir, if I can stand kicking so long."

There is nothing sacred to a Victorian Liberal, particularly if he be a Minister of the Crown. The other evening Mr. Longmore made a scandalous attack on the late Mr. Justice Fellows. "The foulest things ever done in the colony, said the Minister of Lands "were perpetrated by the late judge." "In the gold stealing case and the sheep stealing case heard at Sandhurst he gave the most dishonest sentences ever passed." The late Mr. Fellows was the most distinguished jurist ever known in Australia, and in private life he was an upright and honourable gentleman. In politics he was not a "Liberal."

The Council of the Victorian branch of the British Medical Association has published its progress report on the Kew Lunatic Asylum. It tells a melancholy story. The building itself, which cost immense sums of money, is one of the most imposing edifices in or around Melbourne, and is beautifully situated in an extensive park; yet, according to this report, "the internal appearance and arrangements would do little credit to a workhouse." The overcrowding has been to such a fearful extent that patients are actually obliged to sleep in the earth closets. Ugly, ill-ventilated, bare, and repulsive! It would be a startling picture of an overcrowded gaol, and into this prison the insane are huddled without any occupation for their hands, or any distraction for their sick fancies. The report may well say that, "in its present state the Kew Asylum is a disgrace to the community." Dr. Paley, the Medical Superintendent, is exonerated from blame, as he has frequently urged on the Government the necessity of increased accommodation, but no attention was paid to his statements.

(Continuation next week.)

The *Pall Mall Gazette* says :- The agitation against the present land laws to which Mr. Grant Duff has been trusted to give the first impetus is a remarkable proof of the barrenness of ideas which characterizes the leaders of the Liberal party. It is grossly and palpably plagiarized from the movement which Mr. Gladstone began in 1868, and which carried his party back to power. The agricultural distress which has been gradually accumulating is taken to correspond to the uneasiness about the state of Ireland which the Fenian disturbances had produced. The concession by the Government of a Royal Commission of Inquiry is supposed to answer to Lord Mayo's unsuccessful attempt to satisfy the moderate portion of the Irish Roman Catholics. Just as Mr. Gladstone then announced that more drastic measures were required, and carried the great bulk of the country with him, so the Liberal leaders are now declaring that mere investigation of the causes of distress is not needed and will lead to nothing, and that which is required is a sweeping reform of the law of land. With this watchword it is expected that the Liberal party will march triumphantly back to office, and there give effect to as many as the country will suffer of Mr. Gladstone's thirty and odd measures of revolution, until they have legislated themselves back into opposition.

THE STATE OF RUSSIA.

The *Daily News* special correspondent at St. Petersburg writes :-

St. Petersburg is never agreeable in the summer; but, so far as I can observe, it is made no more disagreeable by the recent extraordinary police measures. The theory of passports assumes, of course, that every person is a suspected person. For the existence of one possible malefactor all innocent travellers are oppressed by regulations designed to secure the detection and arrest of that malefactor; but all the measures of precaution adopted in civilised society for the prevention of crime are burdens more or less upon people who are not criminals. It is only a question of degree; and while in Russia the burden is heavier here now than it was before the recent events, the routine to which travellers are subjected is exactly the same that it was a year ago, or five years ago, or ten. Nay, the actual change in what concerns them is much less than at Berlin. The authorities of the German capital introduced the system of passports after Nobiling's attempt, which was a decided innovation, and the less excusable, since Berlin was in possession of a trustworthy police, and a society which still remained perfectly sound. I say nothing of the Russian measures which concern more particularly the Russians themselves, affecting the right of domicile, the privilege of writing, speaking, printing, the liberty of personal movement, and the like. Their adoption is a purely domestic affair, and English critics of Russia would do well to remember that England would be the first country in the world to resent outside criticism of its home policy. The right of self-preservation is as sacred a duty of the State of the Czar as any other State. When sudden and great dangers arise they must be met by adequate measures; and the determination of what is adequate, and therefore what is absolutely indispensable, is perhaps as easy to the statesmen on the Neva as to newspaper critics in Fleet street. And if fairness towards Russia were not too much to expect of some at least of those critics, one might observe that it is decidedly unfair to ascribe bad faith in advance to everything done here. Well, I have come up here myself to see with my own eyes, and my testimony, whatever it may be worth in other respects, is at least based on personal observation. The more I look about the more I am amazed at the reckless exaggeration of the stories which have been published. It is doubtless inconvenient to be a suspected, still more to be a convicted, Russian; but the tourist who comes here with his heart in his mouth, expecting to find a city groaning under military law, to have his steps dogged by spies, to be tenderly put to bed at ten o'clock by the police, in short to be subjected to any more restraint than was formerly the case, will be early undeceived. Life in the streets, or in the hotels, or in the cafés, is as free as ever. There is no difficulty in getting a supper at the restaurants at one o'clock, or even at two in the morning. Even the institution which was most heartily denounced—that of house porters—is distinguished rather by its ludicrous inefficiency than by anything else. These novel guardians are most conscientiously asleep the whole time. Formerly the house door being locked, it was necessary to ring in order to obtain entrance; but now, the door being unlocked and the porter asleep outside, one can generally walk in undisturbed. The payment of these men is, of course, a heavy burden upon house owners, but the "Dvorniks" are not troublesome to respectable people. The most warlike place that one can see is the hotel of General Gourko, which is completely surrounded by soldiers and police, where every passer-by is sharply scrutinised, and access is extremely difficult. Drenfeld and Sorow are less strongly fortified, but even they never drive out without their escort of Cossacks.

PICTURES OF THE SACRED HEART.

A RECENT decision of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences concerning pictures of the Sacred Heart is as follows: "It is stated in the acts of the Beatification of the Blessed Margaret Mary, as well as in her writings, that the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus should be *sensibly* represented to the faithful, and in the picture, appear exteriorly upon the breast of the Divine Saviour. Blessed Margaret Mary declares that the Divine Heart was shone to her resplendent with the rays of light which came forth from it on all sides. She saw the wound which opened the heart, the crown of thorns which environed it, and the cross which surmounted it. She says that our Lord expressed to her the desire to see the image of His natural heart presented to the sight of the faithful, that it might soften the hardness of their hearts, declaring that it would be extremely agreeable to Him to be honoured under this image, and that He would repay such homage with the most abundant graces. However, there have been artists who have protested against this manner of representation, pretending that it is not conformable to the rules of art; they insinuate that our Lord should be presented in the act of indicating the wound in His side by His hand being placed upon the breast. But, however it may be with the rules of art, those images of our Saviour in which His most holy Heart is not seen exteriorly, although they may be pious, are not and cannot be called pictures of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Such is *not* the image enriched with those indulgences which the Roman Pontiffs have accorded to those who pray before a picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

Mrs. Endall, of New York, who is visiting friends at Michigan City probably will not fool again with a revolver. In handling a pistol which she had asked to see, she managed, without knowing it, to pull back the hammer, when, jokingly placing it to her head, she made some parting requests of her friends, as though about to take her own life, when all were horrified by the discharge of the weapon. She narrowly escaped a sudden and unexpected "taking-off," and was nearly scared to death as it was, the ball tearing a wicked hole in the floor behind her.