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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

**DEVILISH
ENGINEERY.**

The *Saturday Review*, as we might rationally suppose has been a good deal put out by Mr. Gladstone's reference, in his article on Lord Tennyson's poem, to the manner in which the Union was carried. Its comments on the matter run as follows:—"The words 'devilish engineery,' are borrowed from the least admirable passage in *Paradise Lost* where they are applied to Satan's early invention of gunpowder and cannon. For once during the composition of his great poem Milton laboured under the delusion that his genius included a comic element. It is not certain whether Mr. Gladstone employs the borrowed phrase with a facetious purpose. It is more dignified to stigmatise the policy of Mr. Pitt and Lord Castlereagh as devilish than to condemn it as blackguardly. Here, as elsewhere, Mr. Gladstone apparently forgets that he professes a desire to maintain the union in disregard of its Tartarean origin. He has, perhaps, some dim consciousness that notwithstanding his reservations the restoration of an Irish Parliament would be in itself a repeal of the union. It is a preposterous assumption that, even if a law had been passed by devilish engineery eighty-seven years ago, it ought now to be repealed. During the whole of the interval between the date of the union and Mr. Gladstone's last return to office, every statesman has approved the product of Mr. Pitt's 'devilish engineery.'" All that is necessary then, to justify anything, however vile, is a due lapse of time and the approval of eminent men. The principles of truth and justice in themselves go for nothing. The devilish engineery—and we conclude that what is devilish is blackguardly as well—for it is to be presumed that the devil is also the father of blackguards—has been prolonged all through in the system established by the union, and no approval by anyone can justify or excuse it. The very argument employed by the *Review* betrays the weakness of his cause.

**THE
"TABLET"
AGAIN.**

THE London *Tablet* of January 8th is fortunate enough to present its readers with the following extract from a book reviewed in its columns:—"There never was a period when the Roman Catholics (I do not use the term invidiously), were the object of more violent fear and dislike than at present, thanks to the violence of certain Irish members of the Catholic Church who want to be persecuted. If the English Catholics stood alone they would inspire respect at all times. The association with Ireland is their bane." The correspondence from which this passage is taken is that of the late Mr. Abraham Hayward, and the passage was written in 1856. But, at least, it is not the fault of the London *Tablet* and the party represented by it, if any association between the English and the Irish Catholic is any longer made, and if all the world does not clearly perceive the great gulf that exists between them. In the case of the Irish Catholic the faith is contained in a very shabby and contemptible, indeed in a wholly objectionable and disgraceful earthen vessel, but in the case of his English superior the vessel is of some choice and precious material, and in each instance it is the vessel that qualifies its contents, and not the contents that affect the vessel. The Catholic faith, they say, has been a failure in Ireland, and this is a truth which, for the credit of English Catholics of the Norfolk party, should be fully understood in every part of the world. We feel ourselves bound, therefore, to second the efforts of the *Tablet* so that, as we also do, our readers generally may acknowledge their inferiority, and confess that they are rightly held in detestation and contempt. The *Tablet* reviewer quotes the passage in question as an example of the very curious notion of the status of the Church in England entertained by Mr. Hayward, and that is all his comment on it. But at least the non-Catholic most ignorant of Catholic affairs should be able to distinguish between the Church as seen in her English and her Irish members. To suppose that even the faith itself forms a bond of union between them is a most absurd mistake. There is a very wide difference, and let us co-operate with the *Tablet* in making it universally recognised. We do but follow the lead of our interesting and most Christian superior.

It may be remembered that when the late Lord AN ECCENTRIC Clyde died the London *Observer* caused some PROCEEDING. comment by stating that his will was written, as it said, "strange to say on club paper."—A fact nevertheless, which was explained without casting any aster reflection on the memory of the deceased General, and, as to the statement of the *Observer*, it was made the text of a clever lay-sermon preached by Mr. Thackeray in the *Corn Hill Magazine*. Another strange instance of the use of stamped paper is now said to have occurred in connection with the resignation of Lord Randolph Churchill, but concerning which it is feared that no satisfactory explanation can be made.—It is reported, in short, that the resignation was written on Windsor Castle paper, thereby betraying that the noble Lord had written it during the time that he was the guest of her Majesty the Queen, to whom, notwithstanding, he gave no hint of his intention.—And her Majesty is said to be highly incensed at the manner in which she was ignored: The first intimation of the step taken by him was given by Lord Randolph to the editor of the *Times* with whom he was closeted for an hour or so at a late hour of the night, and who took extraordinary precautions to prevent any hint of the affair from getting out into the other newspaper offices until his own publication had been made. The matter is said to have secured for the *Times* a new importance and to have been worth to it fully five thousand pounds in money. But that did not hinder Lord Randolph from being severely dealt with in its columns.—The eccentric manner, meantime, in which the resignation was made known has been almost as much a topic for conversation and comment of one kind or another as the resignation itself and all it involved.

**PALTRY
HEROISM.**

ACCORDING to "Ruffler" in *Vanity Fair* the hero is occasionally not altogether heroic.—He writes as follows:—"I hear that the real reason of Lord Randolph Churchill's retirement from office is the disgrace which is thought to be entailed upon the family by the fact that the head of it was found innocent in the recent *cause célèbre*. The Duke's acquittal was certainly not in keeping with the family traditions. The Great Marlborough would have scorned to be suspected of being innocent in any *affaire de cœur*, and, what is more, he would probably have turned an honest thousand or two by the transaction.

**A SHAMEFUL
ASPIRATION.**

WHEN the Crimean war began, the Emperor Nicholas in the savage frame of mind that resulted from his not altogether unfounded conviction that he had been treacherously dealt with, invoked the aid of "General Fevrier" as he called it, and gave a grim expression to his hopes of what the rigorous climate would do for him. The report of his utterance caused a great deal of indignation and disgust, and when at the time he had hoped for he himself, or all that was left of him, was a corpse. *Punch* in retaliation published a picture of what "General Fevrier" had, in fact, brought with it. We find the enemies of Mr. Gladstone now resorting to an invocation that strikes us as, if possible, more cruel and inhuman than that made by the Russian Czar, and which consideration for the common infirmities of our nature should forbid. "The one point," writes one of them, "which every right-minded politician should keep in view to the exclusion of all others—is to prevent the possibility of Mr. Gladstone's return to office. Mr. Gladstone has just completed his seventy-seventh year; and if the combined efforts of the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists are able to keep him in opposition for another year or two, his powers of evil will have been pretty fairly exercised, and his claws will have been permanently clipped by the effectual scissors of old age." Is there not something particularly odious in this greeting to a glorious old age, this allusion to the inevitable havoc that time must bring about, this aspiration for the destruction of an intellect that has done honour to the country which produced it, and to the race from which it is sprung? If the Emperor Nicholas merited anger during his life, and a triumphant denunciation after his death, because he had invoked hardship and disease for the destruction of an army that menaced his Empire, what do they not deserve who call upon dotage and infirmity to free them from a champion of the right, whom, in his strength and intellectual supremacy, they durst not meet? But in this we have a true illustration of the party who procured and would sustain the Union.