

can Knights look on the organization as something in the nature of a political party like the Grangers. We saw something of the same kind in this city last fall, when thousands undoubtedly voted for Henry George who had no sympathy with his land theories, for the simple purpose, as they thought, of protesting against "Machine rule" and breaking it up.

"THE RULE OF HONOR."

A LETTER from an "Anti-Gladstoneite" Englishman, in the *Evening Post* of Saturday, is interesting in many ways, but principally as an illustration of the queer twist, as we consider it, which the anti-Gladstoneite mind in England has undergone, through its excitement over the Irish question, and on which (as illustrated in the case of Lord Hartington) Mr. Gladstone, in his speech before the Eighty Club, commented with much severity. Lord Hartington, who throughout this crisis has been posing, in the eyes both of friends and foes, as a model English gentleman, has accepted two current Tory assumptions. One is, that all charges printed in the *Times* have to be treated with respect, because of the generally high character of the paper and large amount of capital dependent on its maintaining this character. The other is, that an offer to prove it in a court of law, and a refusal to produce proof of it anywhere else, is all that can be asked of an honorable man who makes a charge against private character.

The demand made on behalf of the *Times* we shall not discuss. It will be received with a smile everywhere out of England, and everywhere in England outside anti-Gladstonean circles. The *Times* is a very respectable newspaper, but the reverence of Englishmen for it is one of the amusing local superstitions. It would be more amusing if it were not that it is part and parcel of the glamour which surrounds anonymous journalism in all countries where it exists. The truth is, and it is a truth which is very clear when stated, that the *Times* is just as honorable and as wise as the editor, a young gentleman named Buckle, until a year or two ago quite obscure, and as the chief proprietor, an elderly gentleman named Walter, neither of them in any way elevated above the rest of the community in character or talents. If the claims made for the *Times* on the trust and confidence of the community, when making passionate attacks on the private character of political opponents, were made in behalf of Messrs. Buckle and Walter, as they ought to be, they would convulse people with laughter.

But this opens a field of discussion on which we do not propose to enter now. What most interests us is the notion, that the offer of Messrs. Buckle and Walter to prove the authenticity of the Parnell letter in a court of law is the only offer they are bound to make, and justly leaves Parnell, pending its acceptance, under suspicion. This, we say, is a complete reversal of the rule of honor, in fact a complete novelty in the ethics of gentlemen, as Mr. Gladstone intimated in the speech to which we have already referred. It is a notion which probably has grown out of the importance attached in most

disputes about property or crime to what is called "legal evidence," and which, in Anglo-Saxon countries, lawyers are apt to talk of, and laymen to accept, as if it were the only evidence with which the human mind is competent to deal. The truth is, that it is not evidence at all in the full logical sense; or rather it is evidence which in Anglo-Saxon countries is greatly restricted in order to adapt it to the capacity of jurors. The law of evidence is mainly a body of rules intended to prevent certain facts from getting before juries which they would not be competent to weigh, and the judge is charged with the enforcement of these rules. Hence great importance has come to be attached by lawyers, and people who live much with lawyers, to evidence being "legal" in order to give it value. Many of them have recently held that even a legislative inquiry, such as that which took place in the matter of the Aldermanic "boodle," should only have been pursued through "legal evidence," as if the affairs of life, either in politics or business, could possibly be carried on without constant disregard of the rules of legal evidence by everybody who attempts to make any plan for the future, or form a working judgment about either persons or things.

The respect for "legal evidence" leads naturally enough to the idea that a court of law is the only place in which a charge can be examined, and its truth or falsehood ascertained. The truth is, however, that a jury is really, as everybody knows, everywhere an indifferent tribunal for the investigation of any charge against character. But a trial at law gives both of the parties the power to compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of documents, and gives the proceeding the superintendence of a judge, which makes it, especially for all complicated transactions requiring a great deal of proof, in a large number of cases the best available method of investigation. There would, for instance, probably be no better way of examining the charges made by the *Times*, in the articles entitled "Parnellism and Crime," against the whole Irish party, than through the Select Committee of the House of Commons, which has been refused, although the charges have been steadily used by the majority in debate to discredit the Irish members.

But the Parnell letter is a different matter. Here the question is simply whether a signature of Parnell's is genuine or not. The body of the letter is not in his handwriting. In the intercourse of all honorable men in civilized countries, a man's repudiation of a signature imposes on the person who offers it as proof against him, the burden of at once giving his reasons for believing it to be genuine. If the accuser says he will not produce them now, but next spring, or next fall, and in the meantime continues to use the signature for the detriment of the alleged signer, he is among gentlemen all over the world, so far as we know, considered a scoundrel. This is, in fact, the reproach to which Messrs. Buckle and Walter lay themselves open. Their offer to produce their proofs in a court of law if Parnell will bring a suit, is an offer to produce them next autumn or next spring on the expenditure by Parnell of some thousands of pounds. No such suit as is pro-

posed could be tried before next November at the earliest. It would probably not be tried before next February or March. In the meantime the imputation on Parnell's character as a man and a politician would have done its work. Suppose A were a candidate for a place of honor and profit, and the appointment was to be made in July, and B, a rival or enemy, were to produce a letter with a signature resembling his, revealing complicity in a disgraceful transaction, and the candidate repudiated it, what would be said in any company of gentlemen to the holder of the letter who answered, "How this letter came into my hands, to whom I suppose it to have been addressed, and what are my reasons for thinking A wrote it, or for disbelieving his denial, I decline to state. He can sue me if he pleases, and then I will tell all, some time next winter. In the meantime I will act and talk precisely as if he had acknowledged it to be his—that is, as if the very highest proof of its genuineness were in the possession of the public"?

We venture to say that few, if any, men living in decent social circles ever had an experience of this kind, except with a blackmailer or confidence man. Most men who had such an experience would, if in good health, at first blush be disposed to treat the case with a cudgel—all the sooner if B cried out that he knew the letter was genuine because the writer was such a bad man. The whole affair of the Parnell letter is, in fact, as disgraceful an incident as has ever occurred in English politics—as disgraceful to "journalism" as to society.

QUESTIONS FOR THE JUBILEE.

LONDON, April 21, 1887.

At the centre of that curious fabric of laws, customs, and institutions which we call the English Constitution lies a mystery. The unknown element of political life in England is the Crown. Parliament, as Bagehot has pointed out, has inquired into many things, but no committee has ever sat, or, while the Constitution lasts, will sit, to inquire into the conduct of the Queen. To an English monarch is ascribed by law not only real irresponsibility, but fictitious sovereignty. One result of this has been little noted. As every act of state is done in the royal name, and as in many acts of state the Queen has no more personal concern than has, say, the Archbishop of Canterbury, no one really knows what, if any, are the matters really determined more or less in accordance with the royal will. Hence, no one, except a few statesmen who know the innermost life of the court or the best-kept secrets of the Cabinet, can with any certainty determine what have been the acts, the feelings, or the influence of the lady who has nominally ruled England for half a century. But if you do not know a person's actions or sentiments, you do not know his character. The veil which shrouds the official life of the Queen has also, in spite of the self-revelations afforded by her books, also concealed from public view much of her own personality.

At some future day Victoria will, no doubt, be as well known to historians as is George III. But, for the moment, she is less fully known to her subjects than any other person who has played a part on the stage of political life. Of her conduct and wishes there are and always have been rumors. Hints are dropped that she likes one Premier or dislikes another. It is whispered that her personal intervention facilitated the passage of the last Reform Act, and it is hinted that she

avored a policy which was near bringing England to a war with Russia. But to outsiders like myself—and almost every Englishman is an outsider as regards secrets of state—these reports remain rumors and nothing more. They may rest on the highest authority, but the “highest authority” is a personage on whose word no man of sense would risk a penny. The apparent publicity of political life in England makes us forget the reserve maintained by statesmen of all parties with regard to the mysteries of the Cabinet, and no Cabinet secret is so sacred as secrets affecting the Queen.

Hence, when England is just about to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's accession, there are a host of questions about the Queen to which intelligent curiosity would desire an answer, but which hardly admit of a satisfactory or certain reply. Three of these inquiries occur to me as worth a few minutes' consideration. Is the Queen popular? What, to judge from history, has been her capacity as a ruler? What influence has her character had on the constitutional history of England?

The popularity of the Queen is, of course, in one sense past a doubt. To whatever part of Great Britain she goes, she is certain of a warm welcome from her subjects. Were she to visit the colonies she would be received with enthusiasm, and (though your readers are on this point far better judges than I) her appearance in the United States would, I conjecture, be welcomed with rapture by all classes of Americans except your Irish citizens. Nor is this personal popularity to be deemed a small thing. It is the result of a life which has, in the eyes of the English people on both sides the Atlantic, been felt to be entitled to respect. Since the death of Queen Anne no occupant of the English throne has commanded as widespread respect among the English people. William IV. was for a short time the “patriot King,” but for that brief period he was the hero of a party, and when he ceased to be applauded as a reformer he did not gain any wide esteem with the nation. Of George IV. there is no need to say anything. His father, no doubt, commanded a kind of influence which has never fallen to Queen Victoria. The “good old King” was a real power, but by a large party he was at all times hated. His two predecessors were to the English people unattractive foreigners. Flattery itself would have hesitated to call them popular, lest servility should be mistaken for irony. But when one has allowed to the full for the importance and rarity of general esteem gained by the display of private virtues, the inquiry still remains, whether the Queen is popular in the sense in which a ruler is so called whose wishes have, because they are his wishes, weight with his people.

Would it, for instance, affect the public fortunes of a statesman that he was supposed to have spoken disrespectfully of the Queen? Would the public knowledge of the Queen's personally favoring or opposing the cause of home rule greatly strengthen the hands, as the case might be, of Mr. Gladstone or of Lord Salisbury? The more carefully a critic meditates upon the uncertainties of public opinion, the more doubtful will be his answer to these inquiries. In matters which touch the Queen personally, large classes would, it may be suspected, feel that her wishes ought to command deference. What might be her influence on the results of a doubtful political contest, no man would venture to predict. We here approach a subject to which the attention of your readers has more than once been called in your columns. If Englishmen are in the dark about the character of their nominal sovereign, they are equally in the dark about the character of their real sovereign, namely, the mass of the electors of Great Britain and Ireland. What do

the artisans, what do the agricultural laborers, think about the Crown? Are they irritated by the expensiveness of a court, or do they, as Mr. Bagehot seems to have suspected, admire the showy parts of the Constitution? At the present moment, the question has a purely speculative interest. It may within half a century become of pressing importance. Government by Parliament does not fascinate popular imagination as much as it did when Parliamentary government (which is rather a different thing from government by Parliament) was longed for by all Continental Europe as an escape from all the evils of despotism. And it is at least conceivable that in England a king might at times represent the feeling of the electors better than a House of Commons distracted and weakened by the rivalry of parties which, like the groups in the French Chamber of Deputies, seem each to be just strong enough to prevent the creation of a permanent Government, with power to carry on the affairs of the nation with dignity and consistency. It is pretty clear that, during the reign of Queen Victoria, the problem as to the possible influence of the Crown will, happily for the nation, remain a purely academic inquiry. But whoever could fathom the true sentiment about the Queen now prevailing among the mass of the people, would possess a clue to guide him towards the path which English politics will pursue under her successors.

If any one ask of any ordinary Englishman what has been the Queen's capacity as a ruler, he would probably receive the reply that she has fully performed the duties of a constitutional sovereign. This answer is true enough in itself, but most of the persons who use the well-known formula that the Queen fulfils the duties of a constitutional monarch, hardly realize to themselves exactly what the formula means in the mouth of a modern Englishman. Its real significance is, that the Queen, in the opinion of the speaker, has conformed loyally to the advice of ministers, or, in other words, has shown herself at all times prepared, irrespective of her private feelings, to carry out the policy suggested by the men who had most influence in the House of Commons. How far this has really been the case no one, as I have already pointed out, can know for certain; but, assuming that the general estimate of the Queen's conduct is sound, it implies rather more than people generally realize as to her capacity. It shows that, unless she be endowed with a kind of self-control which is of itself a most rare quality, she must have been a person not very keenly interested in the great party questions of the day. It implies, also, a capacity for acquiescence almost inconsistent with moral or intellectual originality or resource. Englishmen have now made the discovery, when it is too late to be of much practical use, that, had the Queen resided half as much in Ireland as she has lived in Scotland, she might have conferred a great benefit on the nation. This idea, which has dawned on Englishmen with characteristic slowness, was grasped more than sixty years ago by that clever voluptuary George IV. It is difficult to suppose that Her Majesty resisted ministerial suggestions that she should visit Ireland; but it is not unfair to infer, from her own course of action, that she did not perceive the importance of making royalty at least popular with the Irish people. In other words, she has not shown in this matter either acuteness or the possession of what may be called individual initiative. But, though a capacity for acquiescence which must have greatly facilitated the performance of many constitutional duties, is almost inconsistent with high talent, the discharge for fifty years, amid general approval, of the functions allotted to a constitutional ruler proves the possession by the Queen of a great deal more of character and

judgment than falls in general to the lot of hereditary monarchs. When matters go smoothly, everybody assumes that it is easy to preserve habitual smoothness. But the old saying that, though there is but one way of doing a thing rightly, the ways of doing a thing wrongly are infinite in number, has a very wide application. The Queen has avoided mistakes, and to have avoided mistakes—that is, to have done the right thing at the right moment—is itself a sign of a very special talent. In one matter, moreover, and in one only, Queen Victoria has displayed originality. She has come forward as the exponent of that sympathy with misery and pity for calamity which is the marked moral characteristic of the age. The letters in which the Queen has expressed her sympathy with persons whose calamities have attracted public notice, have probably done more to spread the legitimate popularity of the Crown than any other act for which she can be called personally responsible.

From no monarch who has sat on the English throne does the Queen differ more essentially than from each of the two women with whom her name is most naturally associated. Yet it is, I think, something more than a fancy that Queen Elizabeth, Queen Anne, and Queen Victoria will each be judged by historians to have rendered, in very different degrees and by very different methods, one and the same service to England. They each have facilitated the passage of the country through a difficult period of transition. The truth of this remark in the case of Elizabeth is certain. When she began her reign, the forces of Protestantism and Catholicism were nearly balanced; when she died, the contest between the two was ended. The singular compromise between the two contending powers embodied in Anglicanism was too firmly established to be in the long run overthrown either by the Papacy or by the Puritans. Queen Anne presided over the transition from a monarchical to a constitutional system of government. The presence of a Stuart on the throne suspended the activity of the Jacobites, and smoothed over the difficulties which might well have hindered the union with Scotland. Queen Victoria ascended the throne within a few years after the Reform Act had undermined the aristocratic system of government without establishing a democratic constitution. Each year which has since then elapsed has brought us nearer and nearer to a pure democracy. The transformation from aristocracy to democracy is now all but complete. That it has been accomplished peaceably, by degrees—almost, one may say, imperceptibly—is certainly due in a measure to the fact that the transition has taken place when, by the good fortune of England, we have had on the throne, not a king in whom acquiescence might have seemed wanting in dignity, but a Queen who could let the powers of the Crown be lessened or effaced without sacrificing any claim to respect. AN OBSERVER.

Correspondence.

THE LOUISIANA LOTTERY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: In your paper of the 28th of April, you indicted the whole people of Louisiana, and there are two counts in your indictment:

(1.) The large number of saloons alleged by the Prohibitionists, who will not help the temperate and sensible people to pass the high-license law.

(2.) The Louisiana Lottery reestablished by the Constitution of 1879.

Will you permit me to place the responsibility for the lottery where it belongs, and that is, on the Republican party? The Constitution of