

LONDON LETTER.

(From our B. correspondent.)

Herr Ed. Bernstein, the well-known German Socialist, has been revisiting London after an absence of many years. In 1888 he sojourned in the Metropolis as an exile, and upon his latest visit he is struck by the continued decay and degeneration of the quarters inhabited by the poorer classes. He gives in the current number of *The Nation* some impressions quite in keeping with the distorted view which members of his party invariably take. Why can they not discontinue the use of smoked-spectacles awhile, and gaze on humanity with unjaundiced eyes, even for an hour? Some of his remarks represent no more than the bare truth, however. He says that in the poorer districts one can walk through endless tracts of streets and by-lanes which have remained in every respect untouched by the improvements of locomotion and the progress in taste. The inheritance of an era of barren utilitarianism, they show not the smallest trace of innovation and rejuvenation. The disconsolate long rows of low, grey, brick-boxes, called houses, for the poorer classes, look as dull and dirty—if not dirtier—as they looked a generation or more ago. There you will find nothing to elevate, but everything to degrade. Put the cleanest house-wife in one of these small houses or made-up apartments, and two or three years will metamorphose her into more or less of a dowdy. After an heroic fight with the dirt that surrounds her, and penetrates through loose windows and rickety doors into her rooms, she will finally succumb. She may still maintain a semblance of external decency, but the predilection for genuine cleanliness will die out in her. Slovenliness is the ruling goddess in the quarters wherein dwell those of the abyss. Where extreme penury is the reason of dirt and dilapidation, you can hope to destroy them by minimum wages and other legislative remedies. But how to eradicate them where they are the outcome of the whole surroundings?

American Bar Lila Hölle.

Scheffel Strasse 32.

English Buffet. Cocktails. Flips. English Cooking. English spoken.

There is one advantage in the flat apartments of Berlin and other Continental towns that in London is conspicuous by its absence, viz. the fostering of healthy social emulation. In the poorest districts of Berlin, with very few exceptions, one will find in the flat houses there a certain and, on the whole, favourable mingling of social classes. On the first floor of the front house there will perhaps dwell a member of the civil service or a commercial agent; on the second floor a better-paid teacher or clerk; on the third a foreman or a locomotive engineer, &c., &c., and a similar gradation is found in the back houses. This mingling of social strata has resulted in an emulation in the tidiness of home and dress that also makes for progress in other respects.

Occasionally, of course, the contrary effect is produced. In New York City, where the lower social order is inseparable from the tenement system, numberless instances have been noted where slovenliness on the part of two or three families has resulted in an appreciable decline in the cleanliness of a whole tenement house. Indeed, the undesirable emigrant element has done much towards degrading the native-born American of the poorer class.

The numerous American patrons of the Savoy Hotel may be interested in a serious discussion which has been raging around the question as to whether or no the evening-dress rule shall continue. As all the world knows, if one would sup in the famous salon, one must don full-dress, otherwise supper is eaten in the grill-room annex, from whence a view may be obtained of the main salon.—Recently, a member of the Peerage defied convention and managerial frowns by walking to his accustomed table clad in a flippant tweed-suit, but he was politely requested to withdraw to the grill-room. Presumably the nobleman presented the powers that be with a piece of his mind, for this incident impelled the management to circulate all their prominent patrons, asking whether they were in favour of the continuance of the rule or otherwise. 373 answers have arrived from Savoyards, amongst whom, we are informed, are three Princes, eight Dukes, nine Marquises, forty-one Earls, nineteen Viscounts, thirty-six Barons, thirty-eight Privy Councillors, a Field-Marshal, four Admirals, a large number of members of Parliament, and notabilities in literary, scientific, theatrical and artistic circles. The result is that 352 have replied in the affirmative and 21 in the negative, and the rule will therefore be continued.—At first sight it would appear that this was a triumph for snobbishness, but a little reflection will show that the motive for this surprising rally around "the broad expanse of immaculate shirtfront" lies elsewhere. Everybody who has supped at one or other of the world-renowned hostelrys where full-dress

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is compulsory will agree that, if only for the sake of artistic effect, it is desirable to maintain a uniform garb amongst the male portion of the nightly gathering. The *tout ensemble* of the gay scene would suffer by the introduction of jarring notes in the shape of tweeds and other inopportune habiliments.

The entire English Press has behaved most discreetly in the matter of the German Naval Estimates, details of which are now fully given. Even the Germanophobe journals are merely content to publish the bare facts of the programme with a modicum of comment. *The Times* says: "We have neither the right nor the wish to criticize the standard of naval power which Germany thinks necessary for her purposes whether offensive or defensive".—The reason, of course, is to be found in the Imperial presence at Higheliffe. After the spontaneous character of the greeting accorded His Majesty the Emperor it would be inconsistent in the highest degree to openly reprove Germany for her naval expansion, since it is perfectly understood that the Emperor himself has done more than anyone to promote such expansion. Nevertheless, one or two journals throw out significant hints, and *The Times* mentions the possibility of a supplementary vote being asked for, to counteract the German increase. It has not yet been forgotten that some twelve years ago the naval position was in many ways synonymous with the same position today. Russia was then showing unmistakable signs of ambitions for sea-power, and her large programme for the fiscal year of 1895 gave rise to considerable apprehension in England. The contemporary First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Goschen, rose to the occasion by demanding and obtaining a supplementary vote for the laying-down of eight armoured ships in addition to the original programme, and it is not at all unlikely that, in the event of public opinion assuming sufficient weight in this matter, a similar emergency naval budget will be brought before the House when Parliament meets in January next.

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It is most unfortunate that important German Press organs such as the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung* and the *Hamburger Nachrichten*,—two journals which are often quoted in England,—are adopting a tone likely to revive the deplorable friction between the two countries which the Emperor's visit is doing so much to eliminate. The assertion that "the present moment is exceedingly favourable for exerting a special effort and for getting on level terms with the British Navy" and that the function of the German Navy is to act "unswervingly on the offensive," is not calculated to foster the amicable international relations initiated by the recent speeches at Windsor and the Guildhall. The best endeavours of Sovereigns in the interests of peace must prove of no avail unless they are loyally seconded by Press and public. The present is surely no time for veiled threats of aggression on either side. So far as rivalry in mercantile or even military aspirations goes, England is quite prepared to regard Germany as a fair competitor, but this fact need not necessarily result in strained relations provided both parties "play the game," and refrain from superfluous and vexing innuendoes. It is quite natural that, in order to meet the requirements of her ever increasing over-sea trade, Germany should seek to furnish adequate protection for the same. In fact, she would forfeit her reputation for perspicacity if she failed in this important respect. But the acquirement of a formidable weapon does not inevitably lead to its being suggestively brandished in the face of amicably-inclined neighbours. To the credit of England it should be remembered that although for over a century the British fleet has held unquestioned supremacy on the seven seas, it has never been made an instrument of tyrannical braggadocio; rather have its immense powers been utilised for universal benefit, for the duties of policing the high-seas have been instinctively undertaken by British warships ever since the Napoleonic wars.—Therefore, as Germany already holds the sceptre of military power in Europe by virtue of her magnificent army and its marvellous administration, a mighty force which she has never abused, let her pursue her naval policy upon the same unobtrusive lines and there can be no cause for complaint in England or any other country.