

VANITY FAIR - Volume XXVI

“A Weekly Show of Political, Social, and Literary Wares.”

Issues published in the half-year, from July 2, 1881 to December 31, 1881.

Cartoons and selected excerpts

16. *Oct. 15, 1881*

NOTES

Sir Garnet Wolseley has allowed it to be publicly announced that the Channel tunnel, if ever completed, would constitute a great danger for England. As to the chances of the scheme being carried out, I am assured that they are great, and that already considerable progress in the preparatory operations has been made, everything tending to show that the difficulties are not insuperable. But according to Sir Garnet it is most undesirable that the difficulties should be overcome. Well, he is an able soldier, and a high authority on all questions of military art ; but that is no reason why his utterances should be accepted without examination. Let us look at the matter calmly. The only circumstances under which a tunnel could favour an invasion of England would be the possession by an invader of both extremities. Till an enemy held the English end, he would not dream of sending a single man into the Calais entrance. But the English end is situated close to Dover, already strongly fortified, and a very few additional works, which need be neither extensive nor costly, would place the English mouth in perfect security. A systematic invasion by a large force, in order to capture Dover and the English mouth of the Channel, could not take place without some warning, and, even if such a force effected its landing, it would have to capture Dover within a very few days, for in the course of seventy-two hours it ought to be possible to concentrate fifty thousand troops close to South Foreland. It will be urged, perhaps, that an attempt might be made to capture the Dover mouth of the tunnel by surprise, in which case, in a few hours, a large French Army could be brought over by the submarine railway. With proper vigilance, and a few field works, however, such a surprise ought to be practically impossible. Besides it would be easy to make arrangements for promptly letting the sea into the tunnel by means of monster pipes controlled by officials some miles from Dover. There might even be two sets of such pipes, one on each side of Dover. The danger of an invasion by the projected tunnel therefore seems to me to be altogether illusory and so improbable that, to borrow Mr. Gladstone's favourite phrase, it is outside the range of practical strategy.

Lord Rendlesham, M.P.

Over a hundred years ago Peter Thellusson, a Geneva banker of Jewish race, having become enriched by fortunate banking operations during the French Revolution, came to England, increased his wealth, bought a property in Yorkshire, and married the sister of an English baronet. Peter died at the end of the last century, leaving an enormous fortune and a son, Peter Isaac, who in 1806 was made an Irish Peer under the name of Baron Rendlesham. The original Peter had directed that his property should be accumulated during two generations, in order that the family of Thellusson might develop into the richest in England. More than half the accumulations however were thrown away in Chancery suits, and the rest was divided between Mr. Charles Thellusson, who took the Yorkshire estates, and Frederick fourth Baron Rendlesham, who took the Suffolk estates. The present and fifth Baron is a grandson of Peter Isaac, and a great-grandson of the original Peter. He was born one-and-forty years ago, succeeded to his title at the age of twelve, and at one-and-twenty married the eldest daughter of Lord Eglington, by whom he has eight children. He was at Eton and at Oxford, and in 1874 he was elected as Member of the House of Commons for East Suffolk, a seat which he still retains. He is naturally a Conservative, for he is a wealthy man and the possessor of property in Suffolk and elsewhere worth some £25,000 a year. He was early left an orphan ; yet, though rich, handsome, and uncontrolled, he has not been spoilt by the favours of fortune, for he has proved an excellent husband and best and most indulgent of fathers. He is not of active habits, yet he is very good at business ; he has brought to perfection the art of preserving game ; and he fills his new hall every winter with a certain number of the best of people, to whom he gives the best of sport. He is not at all an orator nor a ready speaker at any time ; but he has a great share of sound good sense ; he is very shrewd at a bargain ; and, without being avaricious, he spends his money carefully and to the best advantage. He has a certain reserved haughtiness of manner which befits a Peer who values the respect of his neighbours higher than their affections. He is endowed with many agreeable talents ; he is essentially a domestic man ; and he is adored by his family.

JEHU JUNIOR

VANITIES

Among the latest victims of the Land League are the officers of the 20th Hussars, who, while hunting with the regimental pack last week, were stoned by the finest peasantry in the world and cursed as violently as they might have been by good honest John Bright, Here is sport indeed.

* * * * *

Mrs. Foxpaw said to a friend a few days ago, "That poor dear Mr. Green is still in gaol! I am so sorry for him, and do sympathise with him so much. Of course, my dear, considering my husband's position, I can't subscribe publicly to his Pretence Fund ; but I have made up my mind what to do—I shall *send him an anonymous cheque!*"

* * * * *

ASHDOWN FOREST

To the Editor of "Vanity Fair."

SIR,—I have just read the letter of your correspondent, the Secretary of the Commons Preservation Society, in *Vanity Fair* of October 8th, and as I have lived for a quarter of a century in the immediate neighbourhood of Ashdown Forest, and have taken a great interest in the litter-cutting disputes, perhaps you will permit me to throw a little light upon the matter.

The timber of Ashdown Forest was felled to feed the fires of the Sussex ironworks, and the constant scythe of the litter cutter has ever since shaved the forest bare. Now your correspondent tells us that it is "better to have a treeless expanse of heather and fern, hill and dale, than a monotonous pine-wood." The hill and dale, I fancy, would be there whether the wood grew or not, unless your correspondent proposes to have the place levelled in order to increase the "extensive prospect." The heather and fern are not there now, and never will be. The greedy scythe of the commoner shaves the forest bare day by day. If the trees grew, the place would not become "a monotonous pine-wood" (hear it, ye dwellers in Bournemouth !), for many other trees try to grow in the forest. Surely your correspondent has heard of estovers of birch, alder, and willow. The country is so hilly that from many places as extensive a prospect as now would be seen over the largest and most beautiful forest that could be grown. The idea of cutting down a forest to see the forest better might have furnished a theme for one of the fables of Æsop, or the legends of Simon surnamed the Simple.

I fail to understand why the Commons Preservation Society interest themselves in the matter, or what your correspondent means when he writes of the enjoyment of the general public. The public neither have nor claim any rights whatever over Ashdown Forest, and the *raison d'être* of the Commoners' Association, which has been defending these actions, was to prevent the public cutting litter and trespassing..

It is amusing to find Lord De La Warr written of as "careless of the rights of others," when we remember that this Association was formed to suppress the poor litter cutter and squatter, and to secure for its members, who are the owners of estates in the neighbourhood, the right of shaving the forest as bare as a billiard-table to save themselves from purchasing a few extra loads of straw. The Commoners' Association does not include nearly all the commoners, very many of them having, notwithstanding the most persistent touting, resolutely declined to have anything to do with it ; but the Association does include many honest country gentlemen who will, I think, be astonished and disgusted to find themselves

represented as the champions of public enjoyment and picturesque views, when they know as well as I do that the motives of the Association are purely selfish, and that, while the course they are adopting will, for the sake of a paltry personal gain, keep bare and ugly an immense tract of land, the action of Lord De La Warr will, if successful, have the effect of restoring this fine old forest of the Duchy of Lancaster, and of rendering yet more beautiful what is already one of the prettiest parts of Sussex.—I enclose my card, and am, Sir, your obedient servant,

THE CATTLE LIFTER

P.S.—I need hardly add that I have no personal interest whatever in the litter-cutting dispute, and that I write only in the interests of fair play and honesty.



T.

Vincent Brooks, Day & Son, Lith.

"Property in Suffolk"