

in so-called society have no other object in life than amusing themselves by inanities, vulgarities, and occasional immoralities, the basis for the prosperity of such journals as "Town Topics" will exist. But the criminal rich, the timid rich, and the silly rich constitute a very small proportion of the entire rich. These people do not in any sense constitute real society; for society in any true sense of the term is the companionship of men and women of wide interests and intelligence. The kind of society with which "Town Topics" has dealt has been mainly the companionship of men and women without education, culture, taste, or character. This group does not represent New York society as a whole; it is only a section of that society. Nor as a section is it confined to New York; it is found in every city of any size in the world; and, if the reports of well-informed people are to be believed, it presents more obnoxious features in some smaller cities than in the metropolis. Such a journal as "Town Topics" lives and thrives because supposedly decent men and women are willing to buy and read it. Hereafter the people who buy and read it will not be supposedly decent.

The commendation and gratitude of the public are due to both the editor and the publisher of "Collier's Weekly" for the courageous service which they have rendered to the public.



The English Elections

The membership of the new British Parliament is now substantially made up, and the result is one of the most sweeping victories which any political party has ever secured in Great Britain. The Liberals will have as great a number of men on the benches of the new House as any party has ever succeeded in seating in Westminster Hall. For three years the Liberal leaders have been declaring that the country was steadily coming their way; for the past year men like Mr. Morley and Mr. Bryce, who do not speak except upon mature consideration, have declared that the coming election would return the Liberals to power; but the most optimistic Liberal has not dreamed

of so overwhelming a victory, nor has the most pessimistic Conservative imagined so disastrous a defeat. All the members of the Liberal Ministry were seated without the least difficulty, while seven members of the recent Unionist Ministry were defeated, including Mr. Balfour, who will get into the new House of Commons by the courtesy of a Conservative who has resigned a seat in London in order to provide for it. Alone among the leaders of the defeated party Mr. Chamberlain will carry into the new House something of his old prestige. The seven members elected from Birmingham, whom he will head, represent the little group around the leader who were not overborne and swept out of existence by the tremendous tide of Liberalism.

It is too early to interpret the full significance of this sweeping Liberal victory, but there are indications that it is not only a great party success, but that some of its results are likely to be revolutionary. England stands pledged, for the time being at least, to freedom of trade. The great principle for which she has stood as a leader she has refused by an overwhelming majority to abandon. Every attempt to put into the background the issue which Mr. Chamberlain raised and for which he fought with characteristic courage and audacity, the issue which Mr. Balfour evaded—now to reap the usual fruits of evasion—has disastrously failed. The British voters refused to be misled by the various attempts to divert their attention from the fundamental issue by pushing other issues, like Home Rule, to the fore. As was pointed out in these columns several weeks ago, Canada has refused to accept Mr. Chamberlain's protection policy, and now the people of Great Britain, after a long series of local expressions of opinion through by-elections, have answered with a tremendous "no" his proposal to change British commercial policy.

Other elements, of course, contributed to this sweeping decision. The cry of Chinese slavery in the Transvaal has aroused for months past the bitterest antagonism among the Liberals and elicited indignant opposition from many Conservatives as well. What the Con-

servatives in the days of Gladstone used to call derisively the Nonconformist conscience, one of the most valuable political as well as moral assets of Great Britain, has been aroused by the Conservative policy towards coolie labor in South Africa, and that policy has been repudiated as marking a departure from fundamental British principles. The educational legislation of the Unionists has called out widespread protest against what Nonconformists of all kinds regard as gross injustice. It must be remembered, moreover, that for two or three years past the lassitude and uncertainty of Mr. Balfour's leadership have been increasingly disappointing to the country. The English love above everything else a clear and definite position; they resent any kind of sophistication; they dislike fine distinctions in politics; they insist upon sharp definition of issues. These were precisely the qualities which Mr. Balfour lacked. No man of greater personal charm, except Lord Rosebery, or of more thoroughly trained mind, has ever been at the head of the English Government than Mr. Balfour, but his failure to meet the issue which Mr. Chamberlain raised fairly and squarely broke his political influence. His skill in dialectics and the great personal regard felt for him made him an adroit and generally successful leader on the floor of the House of Commons; but his lack of decision has fatally handicapped him as a leader in the country at large. British voters have grown weary of the lack of decisive and clear leadership in the Conservative party. To his courage and the definiteness with which he has stated his position Mr. Chamberlain probably owes his re-election by an increased majority from Birmingham.

The revolutionary aspect of the election is brought out by the sweeping change in the personnel of the membership. More than half the men who will sit on the benches of the new House of Commons will be strangers to its customs and habits. The "Daily Mail," commenting editorially on this fact, describes the election as "the revolution of 1906," and declares that what has been called the first club in Europe has gone,

and expresses the hope that the first business house in Europe may take its place. The workingmen, represented in the last House by six members, will be represented in the new House by a solid body of more than fifty. Not since Simon de Montfort summoned the nobles, clergy, and commoners to sit together in the English Parliament, in the reign of King John in 1265, has a more significant change been wrought in the constitution of that historical body. The advent of the workingman marks the latest stage in one of the most notable evolutions in the political history of the world, and practically completes the representation of the English people of all classes in its great representative body. Ten years ago fifty thousand labor votes, representing all shades of opinion from conservative trades-unionism to extreme Socialism, were cast without returning any members to the House of Commons; this year more than half a million votes were cast, with the result of returning a body of representatives sufficiently large and important to command a hearing and to count as a factor in the legislative history of the day. It must not be forgotten that no small contribution to this result was made by the Irish vote throughout Great Britain, which in many districts was cast solidly for the Labor candidates under the direction of the United Irish League, which recommended, as reported in these columns at the time, that in all cases where a labor candidate who was sound on the question of Home Rule was in the field, the Irish vote should be cast for him, unless he stood against an old and tried friend of the Irish cause. It is impossible to predict the immediate results on legislation of this immense increase of the representation of the working class; but no one in England questions that it will be very great, and that a new epoch in the Parliamentary history of the country has begun. One of the results in the near future will probably be the granting of some degree of Home Rule to Ireland; for, as a class, the labor men are very sympathetic with the movement to remove restrictions from Ireland, and to give that country greater political and economic liberty. The Liberal triumph

promises to be of far greater significance than an ordinary political party victory.



Shall We Legalize Homicide?

Now that the proposal to legalize the killing of men who are adjudged to be hopelessly ill, and thus put them out of a suffering difficult to endure and sometimes more difficult to witness, has been thought worthy of serious consideration by the Legislature of Ohio, it calls for serious consideration by public journals. The fact that a bill to legalize homicide has been introduced into the Legislature indicates nothing, for apparently legislative etiquette requires the legislator to offer to the body of which he is a member any measure, whatever its character, which any of his constituents submit to him. The fact that this bill has been referred to a committee for consideration by a vote of 78 to 22 indicates very little. For aught the public now knows, every member who voted for such reference did so because he believed the surest method of putting an end for all time to this proposal was to have it given careful consideration. But the fact that it has been so referred makes it wise, if not necessary, to state the objections which to most rational thinkers appear conclusive against this proposal to make homicide lawful.

The objections are not merely the practical ones which occur to any thoughtful man on the first consideration of the subject: that it would open the way for cunning, unscrupulous greed to commit murder which would be very difficult to discover, and for which discovery and punishment would furnish no remedy; that it would tempt some guardians of the sick to rid themselves of their burden, sometimes by deceiving themselves, sometimes by deliberate deception of others; that the sentimentalists who could not endure the sight of suffering would be incited to relieve themselves of the heartbreaking sight by accelerating the death of a sufferer whom a wiser, stronger, and less selfish love might recover to life; that it would in

innumerable cases add to the terrors of the sick-bed by stimulating fears that would be natural even when they were wholly groundless; that it would make the patient often look forward to the visit of the physician with dread instead of with hope, and, by authorizing the doctor to decree the death of his patient, would greatly enhance the difficulty of curing him; that it would make it easy for quacks and charlatans to conceal their failures by contriving to put their patient out of his misery by putting him out of life; that it would ask physicians to exercise a judgment which very few right-minded physicians would be willing to exercise, and would put upon them a responsibility which only the unscrupulous, the light-minded, and the incompetent would be willing to assume. No provisions of the law, however carefully framed, no professional education, however ideal, could adequately guard against these dangers. But were it otherwise, more serious objections remain.

If a law authorizing homicide in order to lessen human suffering were passed, we do not doubt that it would be pronounced unconstitutional by the first court which was called upon to adjudicate upon it. Government in America possesses only delegated powers; and power to kill, except as a punishment for crime, has never been delegated to the government of either the State or the Nation. The Constitution assumes that the right to life, as the right to liberty, is, in the language of the Declaration of Independence, "unalienable." No doubt slaves were often more comfortable in slavery than in freedom; but no man can by any deed contract himself into slavery. As little can he consent to his own death. This unalienable right is assumed as fundamental in that article of the Constitution which declares that "the right of the people to be secure in their persons . . . shall not be violated;" and in that other article which, providing that no person shall be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb for the same offense, carries the necessary implication that he cannot by any act of government be put once in jeopardy when he has committed no offense.

But a law legalizing homicide would not only violate the provisions of the