

the data upon which public opinion can act. It is safe to say that no intelligent Englishman will have his opinion of the relations of "Parnellism and Crime" changed by the findings of this commission, though it may and must have been modified by the evidence upon which those findings are based. The Electoral Commission that decided the contested election of 1876 is the only body analagous to the Parnell Commission in our recent history. That was a political necessity, for it was doubtful where under the Constitution the power was lodged which was given by a special act to this extra-constitutional body. Drawing lots, if it had been equally ordained and equally acquiesced in, would have been equally decisive, and, indeed, equally satisfactory, for no American citizen entertained a different opinion after the decision from his opinion before, while the spectacle of a body of men sitting in a judicial capacity, some of them actually Judges, and deciding upon every question that arose according to their party politics, was not calculated to strengthen the public respect for the administration of justice. A commission may be useful to collect evidence in political cases, though even here it almost always betrays a political bias; but its decisions will not be accepted by anybody as so valid and binding as to close discussion.

THE PARNELL COMMISSION.

The withdrawal of the Irish members of Parliament and their counsel from the Parnell Commission must put an end to the public interest in the proceedings of that body. Such interest has indeed become very feeble since the exposure of FIGOTT'S forgeries. The strength of the case against PARNELL and his associates lay entirely in those forgeries and in the importance the *Times* gave them by publishing them and assuming the responsibility for them. No other newspaper in England certainly, or perhaps in the world, had it in its power to do so much injury to the reputation of a public man. Some of the younger among the London journals had long equaled or exceeded the *Times* in their enterprise in securing early accounts of important events. None of them, however, had exactly the same reputation with the British public for caution, and this reputation was accepted as an equivalent for enterprise. It has been considered by the solid and satisfied classes for which the *Times* is especially made that it were better to have the unquestionable truth, even a day later, than a doubtful and unverified narrative. The intrinsic improbability of the writings attributed to PARNELL, himself one of the most cautious and least effusive of men, and by far the most cautious and least effusive of Irish agitators, would have been considered much more if these writings had appeared in any other newspaper. With the reasoning part of the public they constituted the case the special commission was appointed to try, and they derived their importance from the vehicle of their publication. Of course there are thousands of Englishmen, who argued that PARNELL wrote the letters because he was a villain, and that he was a villain because he wrote the letters, and who still continue contentedly to pursue this logical circle without the least regard to the evidence. Neither the testimony taken before the commission nor the findings of the commission upon it can have the least effect upon such minds, except to strengthen their previous convictions of the depravity of Irishmen in general and of PARNELL in particular.

The case against PARNELL and his associates thus resting entirely upon the publication of the forgeries, there seems to have been no good reason why the Irish members implicated should not have withdrawn themselves from the jurisdiction of the commission as soon as the forgeries were exposed. All that could be proved against them, outside of the charges thus sustained, was that they were not law-abiding British subjects, and they do not pretend to be. An Irishman who professed to hold the Crimes act in reverence, passed as it was against the virtually unanimous vote of the representatives of the people concerned, and imposed upon that people by a foreign power, would at once have lost his position as a representative Irishman. All that it was necessary for the inculpated persons to repel was the charge that they had committed what are rated as crimes, not by special British statutes, passed for the purpose of preventing Irishmen from governing Ireland, but by the general sense of mankind. This they had really done when they had shown that these latter charges rested upon forgeries concocted by a needy scoundrel and eagerly adopted by the *Times* without any process that could fairly be called an investigation. They could very well afford to disregard any testimony taken after the exposure of FIGOTT. There was a very strong reason why they should do so in the burdensome cost, to men most of whom are not rich, of retaining counsel to look out for their interests through the interminable explorations of the commission. This is an expense that could be put upon the party responsible for it, if the procedure were an ordinary suit for libel, but which, apparently, the accused have to bear in the special form of investigation adopted for this case. There is no reason why they should continue to bear this expense. Although their withdrawal is avowedly based upon the unfairness of the rulings of the commission, they might have based it upon the ground that no evidence affecting their moral character was before the commission, except, indeed, Mr. PARNELL'S astonishing statement that he had deliberately attempted to misinform and mislead the House of Commons.

Among other things the collapse of the commission seems to show the unsuitableness of a quasi-legal tribunal like the Parnell Commission, which is yet not a court of justice, for the determination of questions essentially political. It cannot really determine these questions, but only supply