THE LONDON PARKS.

The Reform League has of late been suffering, like some other joint-stock institutions, from a state of collapse. Mr. Beales has had the hard taken out of his mouth, and a Tribune of the People out of work, is a melancholy spectacle of alien greatness. The Darwinian law is fulfilled in the political world, and in the struggle for life the superior demagogic powers of Mr. Disraeli have driven the feebler organization almost to the very verge of extinction. Fortunately, however, for the Leaguers, the Government, which has taken three months to make up its mind, has at last thought proper to go on with the Parks Regulation Bill, but a measure which has lumbered from the 3rd of last July is not likely to be prosecuted with much vigour in the collapse of the Session. Indeed, it may be suspected that between the rate served with fidelity, that France is disgusted. The fact, indeed, is no longer doubtful that the Empire has lived fast during the last twelve months, and the time is approaching for it to choose between a policy of military adventure abroad or stirring agitation at home.

THE LONDON PARKS.

Mr. Gladstone is kind enough to come to the rescue of the Leaguers, to whom he certainly owes a return for favours received. He thinks, or says he thinks, that something ought to be done, but that this is not the time to do it. To be sure, the events of last year were, even in Mr. Gladstone’s judgment, deplorable, humiliating to the Government in the preposterousness of all authority which ensured on the riots, and disgraceful to the rioters themselves. But “to legislate on the subject at this moment would be to produce in the minds of the people of London a sense of ‘wrong and grievance.” With some wisdom Mr. Gladstone forgot to define his terms. The only people of London who would be grieved by preventing the recurrence of the late riots would be, one would think, the rioters themselves. We hardly think that the shopkeepers would feel very much wronged, or the peaceable folk very much grieved, if for the future the roughs were not permitted to rag about, run riot, for a whole day, and to range street and park at will, and to play, with scarcely an attempt at interference, their profitable trade of heresy and gallanting. For ourselves, the sense of wrong and grievance would be the other way; but the Government, the quiet, peacable, property-owning folk are not, in Mr. Gladstone’s estimation, the people of London.

To speak, however, with seriousness, we should say that the argument for settling this Park question is far too strong. Mr. Beales himself says that legitimate occasions for holding large open-air meetings are less likely to occur now that the Reform Bill is settled. This may or may not be true.
Beall's opinion, but at this moment we are threatened with a Hyde Park demonstration about the Sunday Trade Bill, as well as with next Monday's riot. And it is by no means clear that the latter will always ask, or, if they ask, will accept, even Mr. Baxtor's judgment of what is and what is not a fit and proper purpose for a meeting in Hyde Park. As things stand, any fool may issue his placards, and call for a demonstration on any subject on which he thinks it easy to be interested. Mr. Pugh, for example, may call a Hyde Park meeting to hail the Royal Commissioners on Traders' Unions over the coals for excluding Mr. Gladstone from their deliberations. There is nothing in the nature of the case to hinder the tailors on strike from assembling all the trades in London to protest against the decision of the Middlesex magistrates in the case of conspiracy charged against the masters. Mr. George, in his and against anonymous journalism, may think that what he elegantly and accurately calls "the new sociocratic republic of industry" may be accelerated by an indignation meeting against literary knaves. For ourselves—and we think we speak in the general interests of order and peace—we have had enough of large open-air meetings in London. We have tasted their quality, and we own that we do not like it. Lord Astorley may be justified in his sarcasm that Ministers would be very ungrateful if, after having co-operated with the Reform Leagues all the Session, they were to turn round upon those who so substantially helped them. But if the Government has gained, and if the League has gained, there is another body which has gained much more during the last six months. The London roughs have gained a very inconvenient knowledge and experience of their own powers. The victory which was won against authority in the Parks of London has been practically applied to the streets of London. Whenever and wherever there is a crowd, there is now an organized assault on property and person; that is, wherever there is a London crowd, robbery reigns triumphant. On the truculency of a militia regiment marching through the New Road as many as thirty or forty assaults and cases of robbery from the person took place, and in a few cases only were the offenders caught. Not a newspaper but contains reports of the daily commission of similar crimes in the streets. As a matter of fact, life and property are not safe in London. Magistrates complain, grand juries present, and we are going on from bad to worse. Under these circumstances we are asked to pause; to do nothing hastily or in the heat of temper; to allow passions to cool down, and to wait for six months to see how the people of London behave. In our judgment they have behaved very badly, and they are likely to behave badly for the next six months. Finished with success, the responsibility will not likely to forget the lesson that it has learned. Nor can we forget that, after all, the Reform Bill, soothing as it is, does not cover the ground occupied by the League. Manhood suffrage and the ballot still remain to be agitated for, and are between the jealous and public peace for the next six months and such an agitation we have only the frail safeguard of Mr. Beall's good sense or Colonel Dickson's notions of propriety. At a moment when it seems to be admitted that it is no longer safe to have a review on a large scale in Hyde Park, it might be considered none too soon to prohibit mobs of all sorts. But we feel assured that nothing will be done; for has not Mr. Disraeli solemnly declared that, to pass the present Bill during the present Session is an act of duty which the Government owes to the people of London, and that not to perform it would be an act of cowardice?

The Municipal Government of London.

Mr. Mill's second Bill for the Municipal Government of the Metropolis completes the scheme which commenced with the creation of the Parliamentary boroughs into ordinary municipalities. The local organizations are assumed as the basis of the Federal Constitution, and the entire project is one of the boldest and most comprehensive measures which have hitherto been introduced into Parliament. One of the most important underlying conditions of its success will have been already secured if it be true that it embodies a compromise that will obviate the formidable opposition of any of the City Corporation. That ancient and powerful body has, it is said, at last consented to abide its privileges on condition of participating in the more solid greatness of a Municipal Government. The mushroom preponderance of the Board of Trade would have been more easily disposed of, but Mr. Mill shows his sagacity by conciliating all authorities whom he desires to supplant. By the provisions of his Bill, the Common Council of the City is to elect forty-two members of the new Council of London, and the Board of Works is transferred in mass to the same more dignified assembly. In pursuance of a considerable object, Mr. Mill has the good sense not to shrink from the semblance of a job. A special office of Chairman of Standing Committees is created for Sir John Twisleton, on grounds which are explained by the promise that the office is not necessarily to continue after his death or resignation. It is expressly stipulated that the salary is not to be voted until he is in actual possession at present received by the Chairman of the Metropolitan Board of Works; and if the Bill is in itself desirable, it may perhaps be found that a possible opposition has been bought off at a not unreasonable price. For the City would seem, on a merely personal ground, to have made a similar stipulation on behalf of the Lord Mayor of London. In this case the provision is fully justifiable, inasmuch as the discontinuance of Mansion House hospitality would be a national loss. While the additional power and reality will improve the quality of City pages may perhaps be doubtful. A titular dignity is highly useful in performing traditional sacred rites, and there has been some convenience in the certainty that the Lord Mayor's ceremonious splendour could never be used for serious purposes.

The Bill has been carefully drawn, and the proposed Municipal Constitution, though it is necessarily complicated, is for the most part not unintelligible. The County of London is to extend over the metropolis as it is defined by existing Acts; and the Corporation of the City of London is to be converted into the Mayor, Aldermen, and Commonalty of London. The measure be ultimately adopted by Parliament, the new Corporation will absorb into itself the functions of the Metropolitan Board of Works, and it is to inherit all the duties and privileges of the present Corporation which are not expressly conferred on the Council of the City. The Lord Mayor who may be in office at the commencement of the Act is, as a compliment to the City, to complete his term with an extended jurisdiction; but the election of his successors is vested in the Common Council, the candidate being necessarily an Alderman. The Livewomen will probably oppose any diminution of their nominal privilege; but their powers would be equally superseded if the Lord Mayor were elected by the municipal constituency of the Metropolis. The City appears to have insisted on the maintenance of the legal privileges which have hitherto been observed at the admission of the Lord Mayor to office; and for the present the Recorder will introduce the civic ruler to the Court of Exchequer, and invite the Judges on his behalf to dinner. The gilt coaches of Lord Mayor's Day may survive for a short time, but it is certain that, after the passage of the Bill, their glories would be doomed to early extinction. Mr. Mill has guarded his prudent concession of the man in armour and the Mansion-House dinner by providing that the Common Council shall have power to dispense with any ceremonies which may hereafter be deemed superfluous. The picturesque 页面已满，请检查输入...