

## TOPICS OF THE TIME.

### International Copyright Accomplished.

IN every compromise there are two points to be considered: its propriety, and its wisdom or necessity—first, Is the concession to be made in the interest of a higher good? and, secondly, Will the concession, as a matter of probability, be likely to effect that good? The passage of the Copyright Bill, accomplished as it has been by concessions at one time or another on the part of nearly all concerned,—last of all, by the representatives of the Typographical Unions,—is a full justification of the Authors' League in uniting, four years ago, for the advocacy of what was substantially the present law. Had the measure failed, the authors would still have been conscious of their own devotion to the principle of the bill; as it has succeeded, they have the additional satisfaction, in having made a sacrifice of their preference, of having redeemed the literary fraternity from the charge of being "dreamers" and "impracticables."

Mr. Lowell, the President of the League, writing under date of February 19, 1891, accurately stated the position of American authors in general in saying:

I still remain of the opinion that it is wise politics to accept the good that is possible under the circumstances, secure that the mission-work of its practical application will give us something nearer to our ideal. The great thing is to get the principle admitted in our national legislation.

Both before and after the passage of the bill the difficulty has been to get attention to what the bill will accomplish rather than to what it will not. Ill-advised editorial utterances in England have already denounced the new law as a "fraud" and a "sham," as a measure wholly in the interest of American manufacturers, and of little benefit to English authors. Let us see.

First. The bill extends unconditional copyright to the producer of any map, chart, dramatic or musical composition, engraving, cut, print, painting, drawing, statue, statuary, or model or design intended to be perfected as a work of the fine arts. It is easy to forget that artistic property is not less important or sacred than that of the author. For a time during the campaign it was feared that adherence to a false analogy might lead the Senate to persist in its first thoughtless denial of copyright in artistic property, and it is not a small matter for congratulation that this calamity has been avoided. After July 1, Sir Arthur Sullivan, Mr. Burne-Jones, M. Saint-Saëns, and M. Gérôme will be as completely protected by our law as Mr. Dudley Buck, Mr. St. Gaudens, and Mr. Shirlaw.

Again, copyright is also granted to all producers of foreign literary property, upon a condition which, though it must be confessed to be a limitation upon the ideal right of property, is practically not an onerous condition upon the foreign author. The unsolved doubt in the English law as to whether the American author must be on English soil at the time of the publication of his book, and the requirement that the publication of the book in England must precede its appear-

ance in any other country—these conditions are also limitations on the ideal right of property; and so, for that matter, is the term-clause in nearly all copyright law. In the "evolution of copyright"—to quote Mr. Brander Matthews's suggestive phrase—it is difficult to determine where the principle of security to literary property merges into a question of public policy. But the main fact to be borne in mind is, that by the new law, if the English author choose, he can prevent the piracy of his book in the United States. *Our law no longer tolerates the literary "pirate."* This is the heart of the whole matter, and it would be sheer hypocrisy to pretend that because the American market for foreign books here copyrighted is in the main reserved for American workmen, there will not be substantial security to the literary property of foreigners. A little more of that most serviceable attribute of the mind, the sense of proportion, would have saved our English critics from this headlong error.

The gain to American letters and American prestige is incalculable. By doing justice to the foreign author the American spirit in literature will be reinforced, and before long a better day may be expected both for the author and for the reader. The main value of the law is that it raises a barrier against materialism by the encouragement it offers and the dignity it adds to the production of things of the mind. Art, music, and literature are no longer outlawed of our statutes, and may have a freer range of activity among us, with a fuller promise of admirable native products. Where before all seemed neglect or indifference, now

The astonished Muse finds thousands at her side.

The accomplishment of the reform, as Mr. Maurice Thompson has well said, "draws the nation into the atmosphere of honor in literary affairs." It arrests a widespread moral deterioration in the direction of a dishonest communism which had begun to affect many well-meaning people. It stimulates American patriotism by removing a just grievance which American authors have always felt against their country, and makes it unnecessary longer to apologize for our exceptional position as a nation. The friends of the reform may be felicitated upon its success, while its opponents may sincerely and without irony be congratulated on their failure to defeat a measure which is in the interest of the whole country and of a higher civilization.

### Lobby Evils and Remedies.

THE most thoughtful students of the lobby evils as they exist in our national and State legislative bodies are convinced that effective remedial legislation must be of two kinds—first, in the direction of general laws for the control of special legislation, and, secondly, in the direction of enforced publicity of the acts of the lobby agents and their employers. The experience of England in this, as in many other political reforms, is of great interest and value. Fifty years ago the lobby, as we understand the term, was as pernicious an influ-