

events; but the confirmation of its former vote shows that the constituency remains unaffected by the arguments for or against the Irish proposals. The slight additional interest awakened in the question at the beginning of the session, by the Commission of Inquiry, has utterly died away, and the daily progress of the trial is regarded with indifference. The Irish question has been so long before the country that there are few voters in the country who have not long ago taken sides upon the question, and whom the arguments of either party are powerless to effect. It seems that the nation must wait until the next general election shall bring up the question for decision. Mr. Gladstone's recent visit to Birmingham for an instant galvanized into life the interest of the nation, but a week after the impression was gone.

Among painters, sculptors, musicians and architects, and those who patronize the fine arts, considerable interest has been manifest in the organization of the National Art Congress, which has just held its first session at Liverpool. Not the least important item is the fact that Sir Frederick Leighton has been elected its president. In sculpture as well as painting Sir Frederick has long since proved himself an expert. It is well known that he is an enthusiastic lover of the art, in the practice of which he is so bright a proficient. He regards it not merely as a money making trade but also as a harmonizing and ennobling mission. Sir Frederick in his speech made some very pertinent remarks. He said: "Our countrymen have no adequate conception of the place of art as an element of national greatness. They do not appreciate its vital importance to certain branches of national prosperity. It is useless, it is stupid. It is fatal to ignore the existence or undervalue the influence of the serious classes of English society. There they are strong, numerous, rich, public-spirited, upright, industrious, but incurably prejudiced. They do not like the arts as they are liked and appreciated by some other nations." The charge is heavy, but the president proceeds to substantiate it by an appeal to the example of the truly artistic nations of the world. Indeed he has little difficulty in proving his point and in showing that many so-called educated people are profoundly unconscious of what constitutes a work of art.

There is no doubt that England will have to begin another cam-

paign in the Soudan, if in fact it is not already begun. The daily skirmishes at Suakin have grown more serious and more menacing; so much so in fact that the reinforcements sent lately have proved none too many. The reports from the desert go to show that the dervishes are gathering to the attack, and a serious battle may at any time take place, as the commanding officer at Suakin is only awaiting the arrival of the Tenth Black Regiment from Alexandria to make a strong attack on the entrenchments of the enemy. That part of Upper Egypt known as the Soudan is perhaps the most disagreeable spot on earth for a permanent residence, and it possesses two disreputable seaports—Massowah and Suakin. The first, as everyone knows, is in the possession of the Italians, and the second is held for the Egyptians by Great Britain. Thus Suakin is at the present moment in very great danger. It is besieged by the Mahdists, who by some *hocus pocus*, common enough in regions about which nobody knows anything, have contrived to send against the British forces several batteries of Krupp guns with a force of well-trained artillerymen. Where these have come from no one seems able to tell; but there they are. The British Government, which seems to be in a vacillating mood, has resolved to send another battalion of British troops. Lord Randolph Churchill very sensibly observed the other night in the House of Commons, one regiment is either too much or too little. It is too much if England intends to abandon Egypt; it is too little if Suakin is to be set free from the Mahdists.

The German committee for the relief of Emin Pasha has resolved not to await the result of the Anglo-German blockade on the African coast, but to proceed with the organization of its relief expedition. It is considered quite possible to open a communication by the Tana River with Emin Pasha and perhaps with Mr. Stanley. The committee consider that the latter is still alive, as it seems to them such a large expedition could not perish without leaving any trace. That the committee has come to a wise resolve in not delaying action there can be no doubt, as the Anglo-German blockade promises to be a long and tedious business, and more apt to exasperate the Arab slave dealers than to disarm their hostility. The expedition which the committee propose to send is by far too weak.

It is to consist of two hundred Europeans, when five times that number would be too few. It is true they will have a kind of military organization and be well supplied with small arms, but of artillery they will have none.

"The world moves for all that," said Gallileo, and it might be added "Spain also." At present the question of universal suffrage is agitating the politicians of Spain. Even the Conservative Prime Minister Senor Sagasta is among the advocates of the measure. The conservative party being thus divided it remains to be seen what result the liberal party will be able to accomplish, or will it end in a revolution?

Russia continues to excite the uneasiness of her western neighbors, Germany and Austria. Not that there is more than the usual marching and countermarching of troops in Russian Poland, but Gen. Gourko, the governor of Poland, is making an exhibition of blood-thirstiness terrible to behold. Still after all Russia is only doing what all other nations in Europe are doing—that is, she is preparing for war.

The Austro-German alliance seems to be just a little bit shaken. For some time past a newspaper war has been carried on between the leading organs of the German and Austrian press. The Germans do not love overmuch the Austrian Prime Minister Count Taaffe, and the Count complains of a sort of Sackville incident at the Austrian court. The German Sackville, so to speak, is the German Ambassador Prince Reuss, who, Count Taaffe insinuates, is leagued with his enemies for his destruction. A French contemporary has discovered that Taaffe is an Irishman by descent, which may account for his umbrageous disposition. Be this as it may, the German newspapers declare that it is all up with Austria the day that the triple alliance is broken; and Austrian organs of public opinion take up the glove thrown down and openly declare that a Franco-Russian alliance would suit Austria much better than the present alliance with Germany and Italy.

However, the real enemy of German unity at the present moment is neither her eastern, western, nor southern neighbour, but one within her own gates. France has shown pretty often of late that she is not to be roused up—that a warlike policy is one in which she has little sympathy. Russia, on the other hand, however much her generals