

dence is moved against a Government on its general policy, are the Irish members to take up their hats as often as any but the Imperial or reserved questions are touched. Can they vote want of confidence on the Imperial or reserved questions without overturning the Government on the others? The truth is that a Dublin Parliament without legislative separation is impracticable, and equally impracticable is legislative separation without separation of the nations. The attempt to combine separation with union, vary the particular method as you will, leads to nothing but absurdity and confusion. This fact will confront the contrivers of such schemes again in the autumn, or whenever they may resume their work. Mr. Gladstone, if his manœuvre succeeds, will boast that he has carried a resolution in favour of his policy. But a resolution which cannot be reduced to a practical form, must come to nothing in the end. Irreparable mischief, however, has, no doubt, been done, and Ireland has been made more difficult to govern than ever. Nor has the character of Government been raised by all this desperate dodging, or that of the House of Commons by the barefaced coercion which, in Mr. Gladstone's interest, the Caucus has applied to members.

In the meantime proofs are constantly coming in of the correctness of the opinion which I have steadily maintained from the outset respecting the real nature of this Irish question. The political agitation is the work of the political adventurers and their confederates in the United States. The Irish people generally do not care for a Dublin Parliament; or, if they do, it is only because they are told that it will give them the land. With anything like patriotic unanimity on the part of Parliament, the rebellion, for that is what it truly is, would be easily put down, and the authority of the National Government would be as easily restored. The real Irish difficulty is economical, and it is of a complex kind; so that no single Act of Parliament or single measure of any sort can solve it. There is a chronic congestion of population in certain districts arising from the heedlessness with which the people multiply on a soil incapable of affording them any but the most wretched and precarious food; and there is at the present time a depression of the value of agricultural products caused by foreign competition, which has rendered a large portion of the land unable to bear a rent. The case of many Irish proprietors is practically that of stockholders whose stock fails to pay a dividend. Unfortunately, the only mode of actually ascertaining that land is unable to pay rent is trying a new tenant, which involves the odious and, when undertaken on a large scale, dangerous process of eviction. It is in this direction, however, that the minds of statesmen ought to be turned, and that Mr. Gladstone does not turn his mind in this direction, but fancies that a political remedy will cure the disease, proves to those who take my view that he is not, as he imagines, destined by Providence to settle the Irish question.

WILL Mr. Gladstone's health and strength hold out much longer? That also becomes a vital question when it is determined to postpone the Bill. Success depends entirely on the glamour which surrounds this man, and which, in the present disastrous dearth of eminence and eloquence, especially on the Conservative side, there is absolutely nothing to countervail. The presence of a Canning or a Peel on the Opposition benches would make all the difference in the world. Mr. Gladstone's vigour is marvellous, but still he is seventy-seven, and though there are few men, I believe, on whom responsibility weighs less, he must be undergoing a considerable strain. By his manner during the delivery of Sir Henry James's telling speech he betrayed extreme excitement, and I am told that he did the same during the delivery of the equally telling speech of Mr. Finlay. If he were to go, his ministry of shreds and patches could hardly exist for an hour, and the hopes of the Disunionists would collapse. He it is whom the masses follow; for Lord Granville, Sir William Harcourt, or Mr. Childers they care not a pin. Nor have they any but the vaguest notions of the Irish question. Hodge, who gave Mr. Gladstone his majorities in the counties, does not know "autonomy" from cheese.

In the meantime, Mr. Gladstone's circular, inviting to a meeting of the Party those only who were in favour of a Parliament at Dublin, amounts to a final reading-out of Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain, with the immediate followers of each, and apparently even of Mr. John Bright. So far as the Hartingtonians are concerned, it is not likely that the schism will be healed. Mr. Chamberlain's position is an awkward one, and it is due to him to say that, having in the early stages of the Irish question given way to his demagogic tendencies, he has in the later stages shown both patriotism and resolution. Perhaps his virtue has been a little helped by resentment at Mr. Gladstone's somewhat contumelious treatment of him, and at Mr. Morley's attempt to supplant him. Mr. Morley's conduct is the more galling to him, because, politically, it was he that made Mr. Morley.

If the Party system is to continue (a question which these events have

rendered more doubtful than ever) a readjustment of British parties must take place. There can hardly fail to be a mutual approximation of the Moderate Liberals and the Conservatives, even if no formal coalition should take place. A common desire to uphold the integrity of the nation, to maintain the right of property, and to avert revolution, is a bond of union between these sections more important than anything which divides them from each other. The approximation would be more rapid, and the coöperation more cordial, if Lord Randolph Churchill, with his nonsense about Tory Democracy and his intriguing recklessness, could be got out of the way, and if the Primrose League would cease to play its pranks and be content with the red rose of England. The substitution of Lord Hartington as a leader for Lord Salisbury, if it were possible, would be an immense gain; but this is not to be expected at present.

Conservatives, Hartingtonians, and Chamberlainians are at this moment severally debating what course they shall adopt in view of Mr. Gladstone's change of position. Wisdom would seem to dictate that if there is any doubt as to the result of a division, they should treat the act of the Government as what it really is, the withdrawal of the Bill, and refrain from dividing. A victory for the Government on a division, however obtained, and whatever might be its genuine import, would certainly have a bad effect. It would stimulate the Fenians in the United States, and set the money flowing into their treasury again. But before this reaches you the decision will have been taken and the present struggle will be at an end.

OXFORD is full of boat races, cricket matches, and gaiety of all kinds. Indeed, it seems to me that there is rather too much of gaiety and of levity in the nation generally when the country is in such peril. The British people are certainly not in a heroic mood, and if disaster comes upon them their own apathy will be the main cause.

GOLDWIN SMITH.

Oxford, May 28th, 1886.

HORACE.—BOOK I., ODE 24.

TO VIRGIL, ON THE DEATH OF QUINCTILIUS.

BLUSH not for tears in ceaseless sorrow shed
For one so loved. Melpomene, inspire
The dirge low-breathed, the trembling lyre,
And pour from sacred lips the anthem of the dead.

Wrapped in the sleep of death
Quinctilius lies. Ah! when shall spotless Faith,
And Truth, and Modesty, and Justice, find
A heart so pure, so constant, and so kind?

He died bewailed by all, but most by thee,
My Virgil, who with loving piety
Forever dost the gods implore
Quinctilius, lent, not given, to restore.
Ah, fruitless prayer! not even thy hallowed tongue,
Sweet as the magic lute by Orpheus strung,
That charmed the woods, can wake the dead once more,
And through cold phantom veins the living current pour.

Hermes, he whose fatal wand
Relentless leads the shadowy band,
Mocks at our vows. What then remains?
The strength that fate itself disdains;
The soul to Fortune's worst resigned;
Th' unconquered heart, and equal mind.

STEPHEN DE VERE.—*The Spectator*.

UNIVERSITY CONFEDERATION.

WE are heartily glad to find that the question of university confederation is not dead, but has only been sleeping. Why it should even have slept may seem unaccountable to those who have given any close, unprejudiced attention to the subject, especially if they have been much addicted to the consideration of university and educational matters. It is not, however, very difficult to account for the small amount of friendly interest manifested in the proposals for federation. Many persons are indifferent, thinking that no change of any kind will make much difference in the actual educational results. A good many are hostile, some fearing that the denominational universities will be injured by being merged in a larger and less definite system, others fearing that they will gain additional strength by becoming an integral portion of the national university. Upon the whole, we think the latter probability the greater. We think the religious universities will distinctly be benefited by the union. Unless this should be the case, it would be absurd to ask them to surrender their