

# THE WEEK.

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## BRITISH AFFAIRS.

THE political horizon does not clear, nor does the outlook improve. Business in the House of Commons has been persistently obstructed by the Irish, with the connivance and encouragement, if not with the actual assistance, of the Gladstonians. Not Irish disaffection, which has in itself no force whatever, but British faction, is the real danger, and I am sorry to say that of the triumph of patriotism over faction there seems to be as little hope as ever. The fear which I expressed when Lord Hartington declined to accept Lord Salisbury's generous offer, and coalesce with the Conservatives, has proved too well founded. Narrow and place-hunting Partyism resumes its pernicious sway, and there is too much reason to fear that the Dutch auction of infamy may commence anew. In truth, it has probably commenced already. The subserviency of the Gladstonians to the Parnellites is shameless. On the other hand, the great desire of Lord Randolph Churchill and his set is to rid themselves of dependence on the Liberal Unionists, whose morality is as little congenial to his lordship as their moderation. This can only be done by renewing the Tory Democratic alliance of last year with the Parnellites, and that alliance accordingly Lord Randolph is apparently attempting to renew. It was distinctly understood that nothing was to be done this session beyond passing the estimates which had been framed by the late Government, and members had gone abroad on the faith of that understanding. When Lord Randolph Churchill suddenly gave Mr. Parnell a day for an attack on the landlords, whom his lordship is notoriously willing to sacrifice, the suspicion naturally expressed was that he meant to force the hand of his colleagues, and draw them back into the Tory Democratic alliance with Parnell. His colleagues, however, seem to have recoiled from the trap. The net result will probably be an aggravation of Irish discontent. Parnell will be able to tell the Irish that he brought forward a plan of relief, the necessity for which the Government itself had virtually admitted, but a majority, callous to Irish suffering, had determined beforehand to vote it down.

A sinister feature of the situation is the impossibility of finding a seat for Mr. Goschen. That the Gladstonians should be willing to readmit him to the House is natural, but equally averse to his return are Lord Randolph Churchill and the narrow section of the Tory Party, to whom Unionism is merely an election cry, and who only want to keep power and place to themselves. It was apparent from the outset that this would be a weak point in the position taken up by Lord Hartington as the leader of a controlling and arbitrating force between the two parties. Mr. Goschen's fate will be that of his associates. Between Gladstonians and Tories, no Liberal Unionist will be able anywhere to get a seat, and as soon as this becomes manifest, Lord Hartington's following will be greatly weakened, and disintegration will set in, I fear, in the only force on which the country can rely as thoroughly patriotic and ready in the hour of need to sacrifice all party and personal objects to the safety of the nation.

On the behaviour of the Irish members it is needless to comment. A member of Parliament assures us in *The Times* that the worst part of the ruffianism does not reach the reporters. As I have said before, these men

are of the same class as the Irish politicians of New York, though no American legislatures would tolerate their conduct for an hour. And these are the rulers into whose hands Separatists propose to deliver Ireland, and whom they would trust to fulfil, in a spirit of honour and of amity towards England, all the engagements and conditions which Mr. Gladstone's scheme involves. It is a mistake, however, to regard Irish obstruction merely as ruffianism; it is rebellion. It is the engine of the conspiracy in Parliament, as the terrorism of the League is its engine in Ireland. Constitutional relations with these men have ceased; that is the fact which Parliament and the nation will have soon to look in the face. Either the Obstructionists and Terrorists must be put down, or the nation must allow itself to be dismembered by them and the foreign conspiracy whose satellites they are. Put down in forty-eight hours they might be, if faction would for that space of time efface itself in presence of national peril. But faction will do nothing of the kind.

It is not likely that they would allow themselves to be restrained by the present leader of the House of Commons, whom they remember a few months ago as ruffianly an Obstructionist as themselves, and whom, but the other day, they saw jumping on the bench in the House of Commons, waving his handkerchief, and yelling like a rowdy at a horse-race, over a victory gained by their aid. In the House, Lord Randolph Churchill's insolence has sunk to blandness, and an elaborate good-humour simulates the dignified urbanity of power. Out of the House, he has indemnified himself by a most insolent reply to a communication from the Protestant Alliance, objecting to the appointment of Mr. Matthews, who is a Roman Catholic, as Home Secretary. He lectures the Alliance on its intolerance, as though a generous toleration of the sentiments of opponents were eminently characteristic of his lordship's own mind. The interposition of the members of the Protestant Alliance may have been wise or unwise, right or wrong; but the ground of their objection was not religious, nor one which could properly lay them open to the charge of persecution. They took exception to Mr. Matthews, not as a believer in transubstantiation or in the infallibility of the Pope, but as a member of a political Church, which openly claims authority over the actions of its members as citizens, which has always sought the subversion of Protestant States, and whose priesthood in Ireland is, with that object, countenancing Irish disaffection at this hour. If Rome wishes to bury the past, and to render such associations as the Protestant Alliance needless and reprehensible for the future, let her hearken to the plain words of Christ, give up the attempt to make herself a kingdom of this world, cease to interfere with politics, and renounce her control over the political actions of her members. Instead of this, she flings the Encyclical and the Syllabus in the face of the world.

I TOLD you that the stories of wholesale evictions in Ireland, and of the ejection of thousands of Irish families from their homes by exterminating landlords, were a tissue of Fenian falsehoods. The exact figures have now been published by the Patriotic Union. The number of holdings in Ireland is 565,245. The number of evictions during the first six months of the present year was two thousand and seven, or about seven in every two thousand of the entire number of holdings. This, I apprehend, when all proper deductions of freehold and tenant-right holdings are made, does not equal the rate of foreclosures by the loan societies of Toronto. But it further appears that even of those nominally evicted, the majority were left in occupation as caretakers, so that the number of actual removals was only eight hundred and sixty. It may be safely said that it would have been still less had there been no National League to interfere with the payment of rents. In every line of business there must be a certain proportion of failures, and there will be occasional evictions, as there are foreclosures and selling up of bankrupt concerns. But no landlord—above all no Irish landlord—in such times as these has any inducement which a creditor of another kind has not, to cut his own throat by a cruel or capricious use of his power. Deeply grieved should I be if I thought that my pen had ever advocated or palliated oppression; but there is nothing of which I feel more certain than that these heartrending stories of the extirpation of the Irish people by ruthless landlords are simply moral dynamite, which, if landlords are to be denounced from the altar, in the way threatened by Father Fahy, will soon become dynamite of the ordinary kind. Mr. Gladstone, in his last speech before leaving England, had, in language unmistakeable though tortuous, incited to a renewal of