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Notes.

In the English House of Commons on Wednesday of last week Mr. Gladstone moved the second reading of the Bill to remove religious disability, of which a description was given in this REVIEW on the occasion of its first submission in Parliament a year ago. Mr. Gladstone said that he undertook by this Bill to remove from the statutes an injustice and an anomaly which were a discredit. He hoped it would be necessary to spend only a few minutes in introducing the Bill. As Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1868 he pleaded for the opening of the most difficult offices to which the most objection was taken. It is seriously doubtful now whether Roman Catholics are legally disabled from holding the offices of Viceroy of Ireland and Lord High Chancellor of England. The Catholic Relief Act did not impose in so many words disability to hold these offices. It provided that no Catholic should be entitled to hold them otherwise than as now legally entitled.

"WHAT," Mr. Gladstone asked, "was the Catholics legal position before the Act of 1829? Every subject was entitled presumably to hold any Crown office, but Catholics were debarred by the Test Act." Mr. Gladstone added that he and a number of good lawyers, including the Chief Justice, were not aware that there was any disability except the Test Act, which was repealed in 1868. It was contested whether the repeal effectually qualified Catholics. Parliament, when it repealed the Test Act, had no specific intention to open those offices, and it was therefore his duty not to be deterred from prosecuting this Bill, the object of which was simply to remove an anomaly, which was supposed to exclude, and perhaps did exclude, certain of the Queen's subjects from holding certain offices. If the Bill was read a second time he proposed to move that it be passed through committee *pro forma*, reserving that the substantial committee be taken after the report of the Bill from that committee. The Bill, Mr. Gladstone said further, did not affect the succession of the Crown, because the Crown was not open to competition. The Home Secretary, he added, is himself a Catholic, and he stood as near the Sovereign as the High Chancellor and nearer than the Viceroy of Ireland, yet no one disputed his right to hold his office, and he (Mr. Gladstone) knew of no obstacle against a Jew, Mohammedan, Hindoo, or non-religious person being Chancellor.

MR. WILLIAM HENRY SMITH asked why Mr. Gladstone's

speech was made now instead of during the many years he had held office.

Mr. Gladstone retorted that he had delivered similar speeches in 1867.

Mr. Smith replied that Mr. Gladstone then was in the Opposition, and that moreover in 1881 Mr. Gladstone, in answering a question on the same subject, said that the Government did not intend to advocate the abolition of all the remaining religious checks, such as prevented the Chancellor or Sovereign being Catholics. Catholics did not demand the Bill. Mr. Smith opposed the Bill because it applied to two persons only, and moved that it be read for the second time six months hence.

After further debate Mr. Gladstone's motion for the second reading of the Bill now was rejected by 256 to 223.

In the division in the House of Commons on the Bill Home Secretary Matthews and Sir William Vernon Harcourt abstained from voting. Three Conservatives and nine Unionists, including Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Henry James, supported the Bill. The Irish members, including Mr. Parnell, voted solidly with Mr. Gladstone.

The failure of the Boulogne conferrings to bring about any *modus vivendi* between the two sections of the Irish party has at last, as unfortunately for some time past was foreseen, resulted in failure. The end of the negotiations was announced finally on Wednesday.

Mr. O'BRIEN expresses gratitude for the attitude of helpfulness and sympathy of the bulk of the English and Irish people, and of his colleagues of both sections of the Irish party, who, he believes, are ready to make any sacrifice of personal feeling or punctilio for the restoration of the priceless blessing of national unity. "This acknowledgment," he says, "is especially due to the loyal, high-minded efforts of several of the very foremost men on all sides." In conclusion Mr. O'Brien says, "One of the saddest things in this tragic business is that circumstances have rendered it impossible to give organized effect to the overwhelming public longing for a reconciliation while the field is held by heated partisans, who, impelled by motives which I do not question, but who are fatally deceived as to their own and their opponent's strength, and the consequences of continued discord, have done their worst by exasperating language and insulting suspicions, scarcely veiled threats, and rumours and intrigues to make the work of peacemaking impossible."

Continuing, Mr. O'Brien said:—"The irreconcilables of all sections have carried the day. Mr. Dillon and myself can no longer stand between them and their deplorable work. We should have been more sensitive to the obloquy we incur by refusing to participate in such a conflict had we ever shrunk from a conflict with Ireland's enemies. We can do nothing more till we have recovered freedom of action by getting through the sentence standing against us. On the expiration of that term I shall be happy to submit myself to the judgment of my constituents, and if I cannot otherwise assist I can enable them to commit their interests to other hands." Mr. O'Brien expresses the hope that the inevitable conflict forced upon the country may be conducted without personal bitterness and degrading personalities, so that when the unhappy passions of the hour have exhausted themselves all may again co-operate in the nation's cause.