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LONDON, SATURDAY, NOV. 22, 1884.

THE CRISIS IN ENGLAND.

Mr. Gladstone has won another of his old-time triumphs. The second reading of the Franchise Bill was carried in the Commons by a majority of 372 to 242, and the third reading agreed to without a division. This is, to our mind, an echo of the popular indignation at the course pursued by the peers in last session, refusing to assent to the same measure after it had by such triumphant majorities passed the popular chamber. The Marquis of Salisbury last session took ground on this subject quite indefensible. In his speech on the bill he asked the House to remember that there was no opposition to an extension of the franchise, the question being how political power was to be distributed so that the interests of all classes of electors should be protected. He regarded as very important the statements of Lord Derby and the Lord Chancellor, that they would not attach much importance to the circumstance of a general election occurring before the passing of a measure of redistribution. If that was the feeling of the Government it might be expected that their followers would not be in much hurry to carry a Redistribution bill. As to what had been said on the point of procedure, he asked whether the demagogues, of whom they had heard so much, would draw any distinction between destroying the bill by resolution and destroying it by proposing in committee an amendment which, elsewhere, the Government had announced their intention not to accept. The question was whether the promise of the Government to bring in a Redistribution bill was a sufficient security. Nobody doubted the sincerity of the assurances given their lordships on that point; but for the last four years the Government had not been able to keep their promises. And, even supposing they succeeded in keeping their promise to bring in a Redistribution bill, would they engage that the House of Lords should have a free hand in modifying that measure. The fact was, that if the Government agreed to put in the bill before their lordships a clause providing that it should not come into operation until a Redistribution bill was passed, the matter would be settled. If they did not, the responsibility of the rejection of the bill would rest on them. After a humorous commentary on some of the speeches in support of the bill, the noble lord observed that expressions of indignation out of doors could be produced to order. If a certain number of persons chose to assemble and take wholesome exercise in Hyde Park, their doing so would be no indication of the feeling of the constituencies. The Opposition was charged with wanting to bring about a dissolution. Apart from this question, they had no wish to do so, for in a party sense things were going on charmingly for them; but in reference to this question, not only prudence, but justice, required that the people should be consulted. If there were an appeal to the people, the Opposition would not shrink from bowing to their will.

In other words, he professed himself friendly to the measure, but wanted to have it accompanied by a redistribution bill. Why? Because he wished to secure the rejection of both, or at best their mutilation to such an extent as to eliminate the principle of representation according to population. Neither he nor his fellow peers have any real desire to see popular privileges extended. Neither he nor any one among his lordly associates desires such a redistribution of Parliamentary seats as will accord with the genius of free institutions. Hence his cunning but rather clumsy refusal to accept the assurance of the government that the Franchise Bill will be followed by a measure providing for a redistribution of seats in Parliament. The pledge of such a purpose should be taken by the Lords, as well as by the Commons—the party, after all, most deeply interested—as decisive and satisfactory. But, as we have said, the upper chamber has no real desire to see passed either a Franchise Bill or one for the redistribution of seats. Its purpose is plainly to hamper the ministry and bring about a dissolution, in which case the foreign and not the domestic policy of the government would by them be made, if possible, the chief topic of discussion. By fastening attention on the

weaknesses of the ministerial course abroad, the Lords and their supporters would find hope to draw the nation from its purpose of securing Parliamentary reform through the extension of the franchise and the readjustment of representation.

From present indications it appears certain that the Marquis of Salisbury will pursue his course of obstruction. But with what result? The curtailment of the powers of the Lords as an independent legislative chamber, and finally their effacement. Even so conservative a journal as the *Tablet* was, after last session, compelled to raise a warning voice to the hereditary legislators:

"Has the House of Lords suddenly become what the Scotch call *fy*, that in a moment it has needlessly destroyed all the painfully won work of the session, and, seemingly, in sheer gaily? The supposition is, that in the presence of impending calamity the doomed man is sometimes visited with an unnatural gladness and lightness of heart, and some such theory seems needed to explain the irresponsible conduct of the Peers. Four months of a busy session were spent in making and shaping the Bill of the Commons, and then it goes up to the other House only to receive its *coup de grace* at the hands of Lord Salisbury. Even if the majority of the Peers have been opposed to the principle of the Bill, they might well have hesitated once and twice and three times before pursuing the course they have taken. But they are not opposed to it: they welcome it with open arms, and then deliberately choose to make vain the work of a session, and to enter upon an irreconcilable conflict with the Commons upon a point of mere method of procedure. We grant you that if the debate had been only an academic discussion, and empty of consequence, the speech of Lord Cairns might have been taken as making good the abstract desirability of uniting the questions of Redistribution and Reform in a single Bill. But no such idle position of separatism and aloofness can be claimed for the Peers. They must recognize that their deeds will have a long sequel, and know that they are not free, but bound by circumstance, and, above all, by the action of their own friends in the Lower House. We have, from the first, tried to impress upon the Tory party that their true course was at once to welcome the Reform Bill and to concentrate all effort upon the question of Redistribution. If that course had been followed—if the Conservatives in the Commons had adopted anything like the attitude towards the extending of the franchise which has been taken up by the majority in the House of Lords, the Government would have had no option but at once to bring in a Bill dealing with the more difficult and far more complicated question of the Redistribution. But they did nothing of the kind—the followers, or perhaps we should say the leaders, of Sir Stafford Northcote, opposed the Bill in a hundred ways, and with only this result, that they supplied the justification which was wanting to the resolve of the Ministry not to imperil the passage of the Reform Bill by mixing it up with any other question whatever. It was the folly of the Opposition which made it possible for the Government to proclaim that they would see the Reform Bill hang up safely out of all danger before bringing in a measure dealing with Redistribution. The Peers can not now rightly complain of conduct on the part of the Government which the action of the Conservatives in the Commons had amply vindicated."

The Lords last session blundered, and are prepared, it appears, to repeat their blunder this session. Their perverse obstinacy last session aroused throughout the country the bitterest feelings of indignation. Mr. Bright voiced the honest sentiments of the masses, when, addressing 20,000 of his constituents at Birmingham, he declared:

"The Tory majority in the House of Lords was actuated by the same bitter hatred of the Liberals as in 1832. Who were the peers? He asked. They were the spawn of blunder, wars and corruption of the dark ages of our history. They had entered the temple of honor, not through the temple of merit, but through the sepulchres of their ancestors. They were no better than their fathers. Some of them worse, for their privileges had produced ignorance and arrogance. The reform of the House of Lords was urgent and inevitable. The creation of new peers to pass a franchise bill would only get rid of the present difficulty. What was wanted was limitation of the veto power of the lords. Should the people submit or should they curb the nobles as their fathers had curbed the kings of England? He would allow the peers to retain their present power during the first session that a bill should be presented them, but he would absolutely preclude them from vetoing the franchise bill or any bill a second time. Many persons, no doubt, would think him too lenient to the peers, but he preferred remedies which, while effectual, would cause the least disturbance to existing institutions."

Just before the opening of the present session M. Labouchere, in his organ "*Truth*," employed terms of the severest menace to the Lords:

"It would not surprise me," he said, "were we to see somewhat rough times when the Lords throw out the Franchise Bill for the second time. The people are still in good humour, because they cannot bring themselves to believe that twenty or thirty hereditary nonentities, whose very names are unknown to them, can possibly have the assurance to put themselves against Mr. Gladstone with the country at his back. The impudence of these worthy gentlemen is indeed astounding that it is incredible. If, however, they persevere in wrong doing, the consequences may be serious. James II. was legally in the right in exercising his dispensing power, but when he attempted to do so, he soon had to run for his life. So, too, as Mr. Bright observed, the left hand lords, when they were under the illusion that they could levy the crushing rents to which they were by law entitled. There are occasions when plain simple

people are apt to fall back upon first principles. Our ancestors made short work with monarchs who endeavored to force their will on the nation, and they did not exactly do this in order that a few irresponsible nonentities should play the same game. The smug editors of London newspapers, the gossip in London clubs and drawing-rooms; the young lordlings and their henchmen who address electors at ticket meetings and in private parks; and the owners of these parks who eat, drink, shoot, hunt, and are merry, have about as much notion of the indignation which only awaits a spark in order to break forth into flame, as the fatted oxen before Christmas of what is likely to befall them."

Neither would it surprise us were lively times to follow the second rejection of the Franchise Bill. True, the peers may be enabled by that course to force Mr. Gladstone to a dissolution. But it is certain that on an appeal to the constituencies he will suffer no Parliamentary loss. His hands will be strengthened, while the peers must, of necessity, lose in prestige and influence. For the lords we have no sympathy. They have shown themselves bitter enemies, not only of civil, but of religious freedom. Among their number are some of the bitterest foes of Catholicity. Their very maintenance in their present position is, we venture to think, an obstacle of the most pronounced character to the spread of Catholicity in Britain. They are, as a body, interested in the preservation of the state church, which is the bulwark of Protestant ascendancy, and the pillar of religious inequality. If they fall, as we trust they will fall, may they so fall as to sink beyond hope or power of resurrection. May they in death be as unhonored as in life, and their death be a warning to aristocrats and monopolists elsewhere of the danger to which a minority, powerful solely by gold and lands, exposes itself by seeking to override the legitimate wishes of the people.

THAT DISGRACEFUL OATH.

We take great pleasure in commenting the action of the Hon. Mr. Masson, Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec, for refusing, on his accession to office, the oath of apostasy for Catholics and of qualified allegiance for Protestants, tendered such officials. Mr. Masson felt that he could not in conscience take the following oath:

"I do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, and will defend her to the utmost of my power against all conspiracies and attempts whatever which shall be made against her person, crown or dignity; and I will do my utmost endeavor to disclose and make known to Her Majesty, her heirs and successors, all treasons and traitorous conspiracies which may be formed against her or them, and I do faithfully promise to maintain, support and defend to the uttermost of my power the succession of the Crown, which succession by an Act intitled, 'An Act for the further limitation of the Crown and better securing the rights and liberties of the subject,' is and stands limited to the Princess Sophia, Electress of Hanover, and to her heirs of her body, being Protestants, hereby utterly renouncing and abjuring any obedience or allegiance unto any other person claiming or pretending a right to the Crown of this realm, and I do declare that no foreign prince, person, pretense, state or potentate, had or has a right to have any jurisdiction, power, superiority, pre-eminence, or authority, ecclesiastical or spiritual, within this realm, and I make this declaration upon the true faith of a Christian, so help me God."

We cannot for the life of us see how any man calling himself Catholic could have ever taken any such oath, or how this standing insult to the faith of nearly one half the people of the Dominion could have been so long permitted to remain unremoved. The *Montreal Gazette* says of this shameful oath:

"It is quite clear that no Roman Catholic could subscribe to this oath, which is a denial of the spiritual or ecclesiastical authority of the Pope of Rome. In this country where we have formally declared the separation of church and state, where the forms of religious belief are equal in the eyes of the law, such an oath ought not to be imposed upon a Catholic official, and Mr. Masson is to be congratulated upon having refused to take it."

And the Ottawa Free Press states:

"We have always had a high opinion of Mr. Masson's manliness and honesty; and that favorable opinion has been intensified by his manly action in the present case. We say 'manly action,' because no sincere Roman Catholic could subscribe to the terms of that oath, without violating one of the first claims of his church, and wounding his conscience if he be a true man. No country has anything to gain in a moral aspect by searing the consciences of any class of its citizens. The oath as tendered to Mr. Masson, and which he refused to take, we believe, is not only an insult to every Roman Catholic but to every person standing outside the pale of the Episcopal church as in England established. It must not be forgotten that the Protestants meant and implied in that oath are merely the Protestants of the Church of England. It is unnecessary to enter into the question of the Protestant succession in Great Britain, for it is a matter which little concerns us in this country. We are here to treat of this question and discuss it upon its merits as Canadians, and not as English, Scotch or Irishmen. As Canadians we have no state church—no Protestant succession in our Great Britain, for it is a matter which little concerns us in this country. We are here to treat of this question and discuss it upon its merits as Canadians, and not as English, Scotch or Irishmen. As Canadians we have no state church—no Protestant succession in our Great Britain, for it is a matter which little concerns us in this country. We are here to treat of this question and discuss it upon its merits as Canadians, and not as English, Scotch or Irishmen. As Canadians we have no state church—no Protestant succession in our Great Britain, for it is a matter which little concerns us in this country. We are here to treat of this question and discuss it upon its merits as Canadians, and not as English, Scotch or Irishmen. 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