

THE WEEK.

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AFFAIRS IN ENGLAND.

I HAVE already renounced the idea of sending news. Any private information which I may have, if it is of importance, is sure to become public and to be cabled long before my letter can appear in THE WEEK. I can only say what occurs to me about the general situation here.

THE speech of Lord Hartington to his followers, clearly and in resolute tones declaring that he will not allow a Separatist party to come into power, has produced an excellent effect. The collapse of the opposition to the re-election of the Home Secretary at Birmingham also shows that the Unionists are determined and hold together. There would probably have been no opposition at all had Mr. Matthews's character stood higher and his record as a Unionist been clear. The National Liberal Federation, which represents the extreme Radicals, has come out with a manifesto directly in favour of Mr. Gladstone's policy; but I should not wonder if the fact that, as nothing succeeds like success, nothing fails like failure were soon to be illustrated by defections from the Separatist cause. Not one English or Scotch Separatist in ten supports the policy from conviction, or would adhere to it if the personal authority of its author were withdrawn.

I continue however to regret Lord Hartington's decision not to join the Government. There is far more affinity between him and the moderate Conservatives than there is or ever can be between him and the extreme Radicals. The reunion of the Liberal Party under a leader of his opinions, which he evidently has in view, seems to me a desperately difficult undertaking; nor do I see how he can well sit, as he proposes, on the front bench of one party and at the same time be, on the burning question of the day, in the councils of the other. The immediate consequence of his refusal to join is that, in place of the strong Executive which the country so urgently needs, and which he might have given it, we have a Ministry which, as a Tory member of Parliament writing to the *Times* says, is received with general groans, and of which, there is too much reason to fear, the leading spirit is Lord Randolph Churchill. It is commonly believed that Lord Hartington is much under the influence of Sir Henry James, who is rather a Unionist in his own despite, having deeply committed himself before Mr. Gladstone turned, and is very anxious for a reconciliation with Mr. Gladstone; but I have reason to think that this is not the case. What had more weight, I suspect, was the unwillingness of some of Lord Hartington's followers to "cross the House." This is a curious instance of the influence of architecture on politics. Had the House been in the form of an amphitheatre, the dreadful formality would not have been requisite, and the much desired coalition might have taken place.

THE Belfast riots are most calamitous; but they will at all events show the world whether the hostile religions and races in Ireland are likely to lie down in peace together as soon as the moderating hand of the Imperial Parliament is withdrawn. Mr. Gladstone's Government had actually, and almost avowedly, surrendered to a lawless conspiracy, and the reign of law in Ireland had ceased. Outbreaks of violence are the natural result. But the responsibility rests partly upon Lord Randolph Churchill, who, upon the miscarriage of his intrigue with the Parnellites, went over to

deliver incendiary harangues at Belfast. To a trial of strength we may unhappily come at last, and the Swiss and Americans, in my judgment, did right in preferring civil war itself to dismemberment. But till the constitutional battle had been thoroughly fought out, an appeal to force ought not to have been named, and premature incitements to it, especially when they proceeded from a mere political gamester, were greatly to be condemned.

I WAS at a play last night of which the hero was an Irishman, speaking with his national accent and dressed in his national colours. He was received by the audience with delight. This was in London, the heart of Unionism, where Mr. Gladstone's name would call forth a storm of hisses. In the whole of this fierce campaign I have not heard an expression or seen a sign of ill-feeling or disrespect on the part of the English towards the Irish people. To foreign conspirators seeking the destruction of Great Britain or their confederates here, the "brutal English masses," as the *Irish World* calls them, cannot be expected to be very kind.

THE conduct of Mr. Chamberlain, who expressly accepts Lord Hartington's leadership, of Sir George Trevelyan, Mr. Courtney, and other strong Liberals, ought to be a sufficient answer to the allegation that a Liberal is deserting his flag and going over to the Tories because he opposes the dismemberment of his country by its enemies. Would Cavour or Garibaldi have allowed a conspiracy, say, of foreign ultramontanes to sever Sicily from Italy, or have forfeited the name of Liberal by resistance?

GREAT interest is naturally felt in the movements of Mr. Gladstone. It was believed that he was going to stump Ireland; but the design, if it was ever entertained, has been abandoned. He would have done much mischief to what he calls the "blackguard" Union; but he would have done fully as much to himself; for a party leader stumping a province in the interest of national dismemberment amidst the waving of foreign flags and rebel cheers is more than a nation with a breath of patriotic spirit left in it would bear. But Mr. Gladstone has no thought of ceasing to trouble or of being at rest. He is always sighing for repose; but there is always some imperative duty which enjoins him once more to grasp at power. His spirit is said to be buoyant and his strength still marvellous. He will do the Union much harm yet.

THE Imperial Federationists seem at last inclined to put their views in a definite form, and to take some practical steps. Now certainly is their time, if ever. I observe, however, that very little was said at the Conference about either of the two vital points, contribution to Imperial armaments and conformity to an Imperial tariff. While these are shirked, it is useless to talk either about general sentiment or about postal communication. Nor will any contribution to Imperial armaments be of much value except in the form either of regular forces, naval and military, or of cash.

THE Colonial Exhibition is still thronged and must be pronounced a splendid success. I am sorry to learn that exasperation has been caused by the exclusion from sale in the Canadian department of my friend Mr. Arnold Haultain's work on our Rebellion. I am persuaded that the sole motive was the fear, which I cannot think unfounded, of the effect which prints of Indian atrocities might produce on the imagination of intending settlers. The people have no idea of Canadian geography or of the remoteness of the scene of war; they very likely would not read the letter-press explaining the prints, and they would jump to the conclusion that to be murdered, scalped, or looted by Indians was a common liability of Canadian life. Knowing their ignorance and their openness to delusion, I believe I should myself have felt it necessary, though it would have been very unpleasant, to do what the High Commissioner has done.

London, August 11th, 1886.

GOLDWIN SMITH.

AN amusing anecdote respecting Edmond About is being told. After the first instalment of a novel of his had appeared in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, he went to ask for his money, only to be informed that it was not the custom of the *Revue* ever to pay for the first article of any author. "Very well," said About, quietly, "if it is not your custom, no matter," and he went on his way. But when they sent to him for the manuscript of the second instalment of the story, he refused to send it, saying that it was not his custom ever to send the second instalment of a story until he had been paid for the first.