

# THE WEEK.

Third Year.  
Vol. III, No. 24.

Toronto, Thursday, May 13th, 1886.

\$3.00 per Annum.  
Single Copies, 10 Cents.

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## THE HOME RULE RESOLUTIONS.

It would have been a great deal wiser for the Dominion Parliament to have let the Home Rule question alone. The snub which they received on a former occasion could not have been pleasant; and neither men nor communities who are endowed with an ordinary measure of self-respect care to expose themselves to a second snubbing.

In criticising the action of Parliament, however, we must not be understood to suggest that the Parliament or the Ministry are responsible for the introduction of the subject. It was just the kind of thing that a Government detests, and that only a factious Opposition would think of bringing forward. We are sure that the Ministers would gladly have shelved it, had that been possible. As it was not possible, they did their best to nullify it, and they succeeded admirably. This strategy has been made a ground of censure. It is, in fact, a reason for admiration and approval. When they could not entirely prevent the mischief they did their best to minimize it, and they succeeded. There is something almost comic in the wind-up. Parturient mountains never brought forth a more ridiculous mouse; and the mountains looked very serious indeed when their labour began.

It is rude to impute to politicians motives which they might consider unworthy, and which they would therefore resent. There is no impropriety in trying to understand the reasons which may have led to the introduction of the motion which was set aside by the acceptance of Mr. Costigan's amendment. And we confess that the undertaking is a somewhat arduous one. We find ourselves unable to discern any useful end that could be gained—at least any end that could be satisfactory to those by whom the original resolution was supported.

It is possible to regard the question from various points of view, among others, from a Canadian or from an Irish. Certainly we, in this country, have a national interest in all Imperial questions. It is the business of every country primarily to care for its own interests. Nor will the interests of one country, if intelligently sought and guarded, be found to conflict with those of others. What benefit could be thought to accrue to Canada from the passing of Mr. Gladstone's sweeping measure we are totally unable even to guess. One result—namely, the weakening of the strength of the Empire—would certainly be no benefit, but, as far as we can judge, an injury to this country. And this is a result which seems to us inevitable. It is true that, in the amendment accepted by the House, the hope for some measure of Home Rule being granted was expressed, "if consistent with the integrity and well-being of the Empire, and if the rights and status of the minority are fully protected and secured." There was no such proviso in Mr. Blake's resolution; and indeed the ample approval proposed to be accorded to Mr. Gladstone's scheme was altogether inconsistent with any such proviso. There are simple-minded persons (and some

not quite so simple-minded) who profess to believe that the Union will be strengthened by the Home Rule measure; but there are a great many persons, whose judgment cannot be despised, who are of a widely different opinion. This point is worth considering.

Mr. Gladstone, in his late manifesto to his Midlothian constituents, suggested that the opposition to his Bill proceeded almost entirely from aristocrats and *doctrinaires*. Probably Mr. Gladstone is deliberately of this opinion. It is not quite easy to think highly of the intellect of those who hold opinions opposed to our own. As a matter of fact, however, nearly the whole intelligence of England is against Mr. Gladstone. The newspaper press of London, until quite lately, was almost altogether Liberal and Gladstonian. At the present moment, we believe, there is only one daily paper, the *Daily News*, which follows him on this question, and that doubtfully. Of the weekly papers, the *Guardian* and the *Spectator*, certainly two of the most ably-conducted papers in the English language, were formerly devoted adherents of Mr. Gladstone; but on this question they are strongly opposed to him. It would be easy to mention the names of prominent Liberals—Huxley, Lubbock, Tyndall, multitudes eminent in politics and in literature—who are quite convinced that this particular measure will be most injurious to the interests of the Empire. These persons are as well qualified to form a judgment on this subject as Mr. Gladstone himself, or any member of his Government. What is the opinion of Irishmen on this subject—on the one hand, of the Fenian and Home Rule parties, and on the other of the loyal inhabitants of Ulster? Surely these are witnesses who may well be called in to court. Do they consider that Mr. Gladstone's proposed measure will add to the strength of the Empire? Is it the thought of the greatness of Britain that delights the mob of Dublin as it contemplates the prospect of a Parliament in its own city, and Irish affairs taken out of the hands of the Imperial Government? Is it the thought that the highest objects of the Union will be more thoroughly realized by means of Home Rule that strikes terror into the Protestants of Ulster? No one can hesitate about the answer. And yet these people must have some notion of the probable results of passing Mr. Gladstone's Bill. Every one knows perfectly well that the aim of the Home Rule Party is to injure England, that they hope to do so by means of Home Rule, and that they take the present measure as an instalment of a whole which must result in separation.

Are we, then, to understand that Mr. Blake and his supporters approve of Mr. Gladstone's Bill for reasons like these? That they, too, will rejoice to see the power of England diminished, her Empire perhaps shattered? Such a notion is incredible; yet we are puzzled.

But we must not forget the other alternative—Justice to Ireland. We can quite understand the view of those who say that a measure which is required in order to do justice to Ireland should be passed into law with the hope that, being good and right in itself, no harm would come from it. Will this measure be so evidently beneficial to Ireland that we ought to run the risk of its being mischievous to the Empire? It seems, at least, tolerably clear that it will not be beneficial to the Protestants of Ireland. This is a matter which will not bear arguing. And yet these Protestants are worthy of consideration. They are not the worst of Irishmen. They have not done the worst for the country in which they dwell. It is not among Protestant Irishmen that we hear of discontent, starvation, anarchy, rebellion. Yet these loyal and law-abiding people are to be given up to the tender mercies of neighbours who certainly bear them no good will.

But what certain good will accrue from this measure to the Roman Church or its members? What liberties or privileges does that Church need or desire which she does not now possess in Great Britain and Ireland? Will any Roman Catholic name a country in Europe, even among the countries whose inhabitants for the most part acknowledge the Roman supremacy, in which the Church is as free as it is in England? There are some signs that the rule of the Priests is not so absolute as in former days. If they get an Irish Republic with a strong infusion of American Fenianism and Continental Socialism, the day may come when they will look back with regret to the Union Jack.

But again we turn our thoughts to our own country and its politicians, and ask what they can be meaning by the course they are taking. The political adversaries of Mr. Blake and Mr. Mowat do not hesitate to declare that they are simply angling for the Roman Catholic vote. This is an imputation so odious that we shrink from putting it on paper as a