

it "for richer or poorer, for better or worse," as may happen, and we need not be surprised if, after all, the politicians are found to have a considerable voice in the management.

Let us make the politicians better, if we can; there is much room for improvement. Let us make the people who elect them better if we can; Heaven knows there is abundant room for improvement in that quarter. But it is useless to hope that in this democratic country public works of any kind owned by the Government can be satisfactorily managed by men who are not responsible to the people.

The Irish Convention

THE Irish question is taking on a somewhat new form. The prevalence of discontent in any part of the Empire at this time is a menace to all. The continued trouble in Ireland has a paralyzing effect upon a part of the war policy of the Imperial Government. It prevents successful recruiting among men who, when their hearts are in the service, make the finest class of soldiers in the world. It keeps in Ireland, for the preservation of order, a considerable body of soldiers who are needed at the battle front in France. A settlement of the long standing Irish question is, therefore, of more than usual importance at this time. Every movement designed to accomplish such a result must be hailed with satisfaction, even if there are grave doubts of its success. The action of the British Government in proposing the holding of a convention representing all sections of the Irish people is one that must meet with almost general approval.

Ireland has had grievances in the past. For some years, however, the majority of the British people have been making earnest efforts to remove the grievances and deal justly and generously with Ireland. If the old Irish Home Rule question has not been settled, it has not been because of any hostility on the part of the English people, but because the Irish people themselves have not been able to reach anything approaching an agreement as to what they desire. That fact does not always impress itself as it should upon the citizens of other countries who, having sympathy with Ireland, have too readily assumed that England is treating the Emerald Isle unjustly. The calling of the convention, whether it lead to a settlement or not, will do much to remove erroneous impressions as to the situation, for it is a declaration, so clear as to be evident to all, that the people of the other parts of the United Kingdom are ready to give Ireland almost any scheme of Home Rule, within the Empire, that the Irish people can agree upon. "We Englishmen, Scotchmen and Welshmen," say the Government in effect, "have tried to devise measures to meet the Irish situation and we have failed. We are ready to stand aside and have a convention of Irishmen, without any interference of others, apply themselves to the finding of a solution of the problem." Of course, absolute unanimity is not to be looked for. Under the best conditions differences of opinion might be expected. These differences will naturally be emphasized in a case where issues concerning race and creed have been raised. No dissent by any small and irresponsible section of opinion should be allowed to stand in the way of a settlement. But it is well to recognize that any Home Rule measure which is bitterly assailed by a large and influential portion of the Irish people cannot be expected to work out well. Consequently every movement that of-

fers even a hope of an agreement among the large sections of Irish public opinion should be welcomed.

There is such a hope in the calling of the Irish convention. There is at present a better atmosphere for the consideration of the question than at any previous time. Many public men of the United Kingdom whose differences on the subject in the past produced strong antagonisms have learned to know each other better and to trust each other more. Mr. John Redmond and his Nationalist party, long regarded by many Englishmen as dangerous if not as disloyal men, have in the Empire's crisis proved their loyalty and their devotion in a manner which has won admiration from all except an extreme section of Irishmen, with whose aims and methods the Nationalist leaders have no sympathy. Sir Edward Carson, the chief representative of the Ulster Unionists, has as a member of the Cabinet accepted the responsibility of proposing the convention and will use his influence to induce his people to attend. Lord Lansdowne, one of the strongest and ablest opponents of Home Rule, has given his approval to the meeting, although naturally he is less hopeful than some others of its success. The only section of Irishmen who are avowedly hostile to the movement are those connected with the Sinn Fein society, who are seeking, not constitutional Home Rule for Ireland within the Empire, but Ireland as a separate nation. There is little hope of the leaders of this mad project taking part in any reasonable movement. Their hostility is to be counted on. But there is much reason for hoping that many of the Sinn Fein men will be willing to separate themselves from the extremists and co-operate with sane Irishmen when they see, as they should see now, the evidence of the sincere desire of the English people to settle the Irish question in a just and generous way. If Mr. John Redmond, representing the majority of the Irish people, and Sir Edward Carson, representing the powerful Ulster party, can find a common ground of action, the Sinn Fein party is not likely to become large enough to be dangerous.

Altogether, the Irish situation is interesting and more hopeful than it has been for a long time. It is not too much to hope for a solution of the Irish problem through the work of the convention, and even if that happy result is not reached at the moment, the convention should serve a good purpose in making the whole Irish situation clearer to the world at large.

Second Chambers

THE Australian Colonies are in most things inclined to favor what may be called progressive, if not radical legislation. In that respect they are much more advanced than Canada. On one important question, however, one of the States of the Commonwealth has just exhibited a rather remarkable conservatism. The State of Queensland has two legislative chambers, constituted in the same manner as our Canadian Parliament; the lower house elected by the people, the upper house—the Legislative Council—the members of which are appointed for life by the Government of the day. There has been an agitation against the upper house and a referendum has just taken place, with the result that the people have decided not to abolish the Legislative Council.

In Canada we have an upper house of the Dominion Parliament—the Senate—the mem-

bers of which are chosen for life by the Government of the day. There has long been much objection to the constitution of the Senate and only a few days ago the subject was discussed in the House of Commons. As usual, there were wide differences of opinion. While the abolition of the Senate has its advocates, the general tendency of Canadian opinion seems to be that a second chamber is necessary. That the present system of constituting the Senate is objectionable is very widely acknowledged, but nobody has so far produced a scheme of reform which could be generally accepted.

In our Provincial Legislatures, which correspond to the Legislature of the State of Queensland, the bi-cameral system was adopted at the beginning of the union by all the provinces except Ontario. In the prairie provinces, established later, the single chamber system was adopted. Gradually our second chambers are being abolished. British Columbia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick have given up their upper houses. In Nova Scotia there was for a time a vigorous movement for abolition of the Legislative Council, but it did not succeed. To-day Nova Scotia and Quebec are the only provinces which have two legislative chambers. The advocates of second chambers will find much comfort in the decision of the people of Queensland to retain the Legislative Council.

Queer Fellows

OUR contemporary the *Carleton*, in discussing the question of conscription, suggests that for the carrying out of the scheme, "non-partisan local boards or commissions" should be appointed, "men who know not Conservative or Liberal and have no leaning to either party." This aim is excellent. But where are such strange beings to be found? There is, as all know, the "independent voter," who is not closely attached to any party, but he would not, as a rule confess that he "knew neither Conservative or Liberal," and "had no leanings to either party." If there are men whose minds are so blank on our political questions, would it not be better to look them up instead of assigning them to positions calling for intelligence?

Conscription Troubles

THE conscription question is one on which there may be honest differences of opinion among loyal citizens, and therefore no one should attempt to prevent the fair discussion of the subject, or the making of protests by those who feel obliged to dissent from the steps that are being taken at Ottawa. But if freedom of speech is a thing to be valued and cherished, disorder and violence are things to be condemned and punished. The foolish men who, to manifest their disapproval of conscription, smashed the windows of two newspaper offices in this city served no good purpose. On the contrary, they brought discredit upon themselves and weakened the legitimate influence of opponents of conscription.

Every good citizen will feel that it is his duty to frown down all attempts to create disorder, and those in authority will have to administer prompt and severe punishment to all who resort to violence.