

have thought, self-imposed, it would not be surprising should the government and people of a future day refuse to lie under the pressure of the dead hand. Such deals as the one in question present a very serious problem for future solution.

Now that the full text of the Irish Home Rule Bill is published, surprise is expressed in some quarters at the very effective provision it makes for maintaining the supremacy of the British Parliament. But so far as we are aware this Imperial supremacy has always been declared by the Gladstone party to be a *sine qua non* of any possible measure for giving local self-government to Ireland. The cry of "separation," "dismemberment," etc., has been an effective weapon for the opponents of the movement, and in many cases has no doubt been honestly employed. There is, too, always room for argument in support of the view that any form of home-rule is sure to be used as the entering of the wedge by which complete separation will sooner or later be attempted, if not actually attained. But the demand for anything approaching to actual independence has never been made, save by a very few of the more rabid Irish extremists. To every one possessing a modicum of statesmanship it has always been evident that the existence of a virtually independent Ireland, side by side with Great Britain, is a political impossibility, and that any attempt to carry out such an arrangement would almost inevitably result in a re-conquest at no distant day. It is possible that the hope of a reconciled, loyal, and prosperous Ireland as an integral part of the British Empire may prove in practice to be but the impossible dream of enthusiasts, but it is only fair that those who have so long cherished it and are now seeking its realization in a Home Rule Bill should have credit of honesty of intention and purpose, of which the Gladstone Bill gives so clear internal evidence.

It is, we confess, not a little difficult to harmonize with the foregoing view the fact that in the first Home-Rule Bill no provision was made for continuing Irish representation in the Imperial Parliament, and the further fact that some friends of Home Rule still object to the presence of Irish members at Westminster. How it could be seriously hoped to retain Ireland as a part of the kingdom, and Irishmen as loyal subjects, contributing to the Imperial treasury while having no voice in the disposal of the money, or in determining the policy of the Empire, is one of the things which we have never been able to understand. If the present legislative union is to be modified at the demand of the discontented Irish upon whom it was forced in less happy days, the choice must evidently be between separation and some form of federation. The proposed Home-Rule is virtually a scheme for effecting the latter. There are undoubtedly great practical difficulties in drawing the line between matters strictly Imperial, upon which the Irish members will have the same right to vote as other citizens of the Empire, and those which affect only England or Scotland, or both, but the principle is perfectly clear. On the same principle, it is true, Scotland has a right to object, and does sometimes object to the interposition of the votes of English members in matters purely Scottish. Should the Irish scheme be adopted and work well, the solution of the whole question of local legislation will probably

be found, at no distant day, in the extension of the federal system to the other members of the kingdom.

In answer to questions by Mr. Laurier, the Minister of Finance the other day informed the House that the Canadian treaty with France has been signed by representatives of the two Governments, but that our own Government is not yet prepared to give definite information touching its contents. Is not this a little singular, not to say ominous? It is not to be supposed, surely, that the Canadian Government can have authorized any representative to sign a treaty of whose contents it has not definite knowledge. Commercial treaties, though sometimes necessary, in consequence of the narrow policy of protectionist governments, are but imperfect devices for the furtherance of that international commerce which should be free as the winds of heaven, as a beneficent providence evidently designed it to be. In any case it is easy to pay too dear for them, especially when the equivalent to be received is not free admission of even the specified goods, but only admission on the lower scale of a high tariff. If it be true that Canada engages to give France the benefit of a "a most favoured nation" clause, the forthcoming document will need to be very carefully scanned by Parliament in order to see what are the advantages to be received in return for thus tying the hands, not only of the present, but of future governments, in case of an opportunity to effect a large reciprocity arrangement with the only nation which has great advantages to offer in return for special treatment.

Dark are the ways of European statesmen and uncertain the issues of European politics. Some such reflection must force itself upon the mind of any one who surveys the field of old-world diplomacy at the present juncture. While the German Emperor and his Chancellor are straining every nerve to secure the passage of the Army Bill, on the ground that it is necessary in order to make the combined forces of the triple alliance more nearly a match for the combined armies of France and Russia, they are, on the other hand, apparently sparing no blandishments with a view to bring about a good understanding with Russia herself. Then, according to an influential Russian journal, Russia, on her part, is not without good hope of being able to secure the friendship of Austria, though the armies as well as the Governments of the two nations are now glaring at each other across the international boundary. "Russia has always believed," says the journal referred to, the "Svet" (World), "that the friendship of Austria is not altogether lost to her." The many mutations in Austria's alliances within the last eighty years are enumerated as affording ground for the belief that she may once more change sides. "Should the Magyars persist in their arrogant course towards the dynasty, Austria may find it more advantageous for her own safety to join the Russo-French alliance." But the Russo-French alliance itself is evidently too loose and superficial, and the nations and Governments are too unlike in character and aims, to afford any very good prospect of stability or permanency. Italy, in her turn, is on the verge of bankruptcy and may be compelled to forsake the triple alliance at

almost any moment, through sheer inability to keep up the pace. Altogether the situation is very complicated, and if the ever-threatening war-conflagration is staved off for a few years longer, it is impossible to forecast the changes which may take place in the relations of the various powers to each other. The only thing which seems actually beyond possibility is that the people should become sensible enough to disband or greatly reduce their armies and learn to live in peace and good-will.

From statistics which appeared in the London Times a few weeks since, it appears that during the last six years nineteen owners of racehorses in England have won very nearly a million of pounds sterling in prizes alone. It is further computed that there are something like a hundred owners of racehorses in England whose annual winnings average anywhere between £1,000 and £33,000. These sums, large as they are, are, as the Spectator reminds us, absolutely nothing compared to the sum which changes hands in the way of betting. "Though it might be easy to show," adds the Spectator, "that the principal names that are known in racing circles belong all to honourable and upright men, what does that prove in view of the fact that the pursuit offers a means of dishonest livelihood to thousands of the meanest swindlers, and a temptation to ten times that number of weak-kneed fools?" The extent to which the "amusement" is carried may be judged from the fact that the principal race-meetings during the current year are very nearly a hundred, each extending over two or three days, while there are two or three times as many more of an inferior class, which are nevertheless, very largely attended, and fully reported in the sporting papers. The Spectator says that horseracing is one of the most popular pastimes of the very rich, that its present importance is due to the wealth and interested spirit of the members of the Jockey Club, to whom the country owes the most gigantic gambling institution known, the stock exchange excepted. It is these scrupulously honourable men who make the pursuit reputable and save it from utter condemnation, thus enabling thousands of rogues to make a living out of tens of thousands of fools.

THE BUDGET DEBATE.

The object of the Budget Speech, which plays so prominent a part in the programme of every Parliamentary session, is, we suppose, to set forth the financial condition of the country. It is the annual stock-taking, the exposition of the national balance sheet, showing the relations of receipts to expenditures during the year then past, and estimating their probable relations during the year to come. The chief merits of a budget speech are, therefore, completeness, accuracy, and lucidity. It must, of necessity, be largely statistical, and as figures and quantities are naturally dry elements in a speech, the Financial Minister who is able to so marshal and array these and so present them as to make the details not only clear but interesting to his audience, must possess a certain kind of genius. In this, the essential part of the budget speech proper, Mr. Foster succeeded admirably. His arrangement and presentation of the facts and figures were not only so clear as to be easily followed by every attentive listener, but were clothed in a rhetorical garb so pleasing as to relieve the subject-