

LETTER FROM LONDON.

Weekly Correspondence of the Register.

LONDON, Eng., Nov. 3rd, 1893.

A change has come at last, and, as if to herald the opening of parliament, the weather we have been enjoying of late has been charming indeed. England at present is simply steeped in sunshine during the day, and the nights are cloudless and starlit. The strawberry season has begun again, and in some places the plants have blossomed for the third time this year.

There is a consensus of opinion here now that the extraordinary manifestations of friendliness between France and Russia evinced by the recent fetes at Toulon and Paris must be taken more or less seriously. Russia was at first cold, then coy, and finally quite affectionate. There has probably been nothing in the nature of a formal alliance between the two powers up to the present time. But no careful observer of the current of European politics would be startled to hear of such an arrangement, as a counterblast to the Triple Alliance, being arrived at in the near future. Even now people are beginning to talk of the Double Alliance. France must act with Russia and Russia wants to weaken England by getting a foothold, so to speak, in the Mediterranean. Russia may mass her troops on the German frontier, but her real target is England; and the very fact that Lord Spencer was put up the other night to allay the popular alarm shows the anxiety felt by the Government in the matter.

I hear that Lord Randolph Churchill is grievously disappointed with the results of his provincial tour. When he mapped out his programme for the recess he intended to "rouse" the country against Home Rule, but he has egregiously failed, and he purposes now to lie low for a while. It is true he has drawn large audiences—his fascinating personality is a perennial attraction to country Conservatives—but in no case has he succeeded in arousing any special enthusiasm. In more than one instance the local party managers were so chagrined at the failure of his speech that they resolved on the spot they would never ask the noble lord to visit the constituency again. There may be a great future before Lord Randolph, as his career thus far has been a succession of surprises, but for the moment his star is certainly not in the ascendant. Occasionally we have flashes of the old Randolphian humour, but these scintillations are becoming rarer, and his late speeches have been insufferably dull. His nervousness and defective articulation, which were painfully manifest to the House of Commons in the Home Rule debate, show no signs of improvement; and though he has remarkable energy and struggles hard to keep up to his old form, still even his friends admit that his utter collapse is only a question of time.

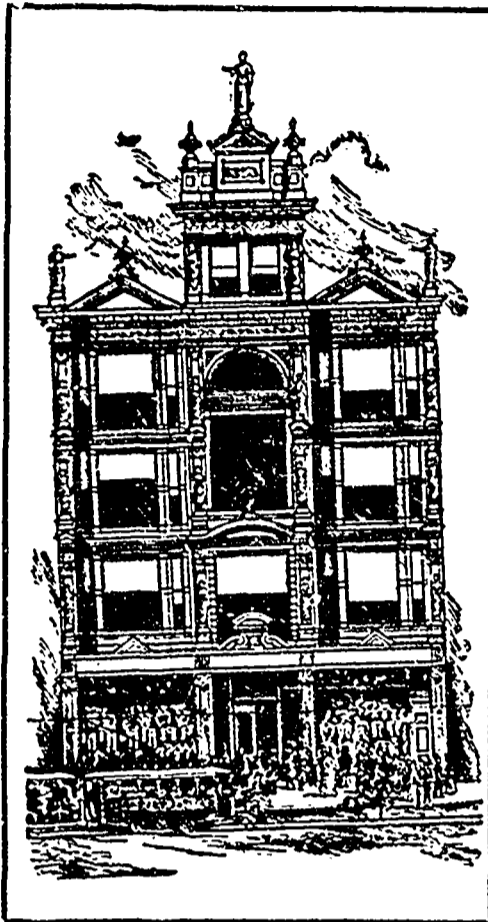
Mr. John Redmond lays great stress on what he is pleased to call emasculation of the Home Rule Bill, and declares that had Mr. Parnell lived a very different measure would have passed through the House of Commons. Mr. Redmond has amused himself by ruing the changes on this declaration since the adjournment of Parliament, varied by threats of antagonism to the Government, which have been hailed with acclamation by the Tories. Under these circumstances, therefore, Mr. O'Brien has rendered good service by reminding us that Mr. James O'Kelly, one of the most influential of the Parnellites, who did not gain a seat in Parliament at the general election, has admitted that the Bill which has received the seal and sanction of the House of Commons is a better Bill than the Bill which was accepted by Mr. Parnell in 1886. While dealing with Mr. O'Kelly it may be well to remark that not a word of carping criticism has ever escaped him on the present attitude of the Liberal Party towards Home Rule, and when the third reading of the Bill was carried he was most enthusiastic over the victory, for which he had laboured so long and had suffered so much to gain in behalf of his country.

Although Mr. O'Kelly is no longer a member of Parliament, he watches the proceedings when the House is in session from a seat in the Press Gallery, and is frequently to be seen in the lobby holding conference with his Parnellite friends. He was beaten at the last election by the small majority of fifty votes, his successful opponent being another well-known Irish journalist, Mr. M. Bodkin, who distinguished himself one summer night this year by addressing the Speaker as "Your Reverence." Mr. O'Kelly has had a most adventurous career, and his present humdrum life of a Parliamentary correspondent is not so congenial to his taste as incursions into the heart of Africa for the purpose of interviewing the Mahdi. He is a prominent figure in political circles in Dublin, and at the demonstration on the anniversary of Parnell's death he was chosen to make the oration at Glasnevin Cemetery. Some of those who were present say it was the most impressive speech they ever heard at an open air gathering.

The statement just issued with an air of authority that Mr. Gladstone has made up his mind to retire from the House of Commons at the end of this session is one of those delightful little myths which are regularly served up for the delectation of the public

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when there is a dearth of more substantial news. I am assured by those who ought to know that the Prime Minister has absolutely no plans for the future so far as he is personally concerned.

In almost the last speech he made in the House of Commons he alluded to the uncertainty of his life, and said it would be presumptuous on his part to make promises for even twelve months ahead. The wear and tear, the stress and strain of Parliamentary life seem to be a kind of elixir to Mr. Gladstone, and he positively thrives on what exhausts other people. He was fresher and more buoyant than any of his colleagues at the close of the long and weary debates on Home Rule, although the chief of the burden had fallen on his shoulders. It can not be expected in the natural order of things that the Premier will be able to carry on his incessant Parliamentary labours for any long period, but voluntary retirement is not at present in his programme.

There were no traces whatever of the turbulence of the Home Rule debates in the proceedings of the House of Commons when it met for the first time after its brief holiday. Members were scattered about the benches like plums in a poverty stricken Christmas pudding, and in the strangers' gallery there were large barren patches which would have filled a circus manager with sorrow. Even the roads by which members approach the Legislative Chamber did not contain the crowds which usually assemble there, and the Prime Minister, who was one of the first arrivals, did not receive the hearty cheer which usually greets him on his return from a holiday. The right hon. gentleman looked exceptionally robust, and, as he reclined on the Treasury Bench he did not appear to have lost any of his physical vigour by the strain of the Home Rule debates. Truth to tell, members on all sides felt a great reluctance to return to the House of Commons in November after the revels of a brief holiday, and as the division is not likely to take place this week, the attendance will for two or three days continue scarce.

As I write the Bishop of Liverpool is reported as sinking fast, and his death is hourly expected. He is well known and highly respected, and his demise will cause a wide blank in the ranks of the English episcopacy.

The Star Almanac of Montreal for 1894 is out; happy is the man who can get a copy. Thousands were disappointed last year.

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