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CURRENT TOPICS.

The cable brought us the other day an announcement which will seem incredible to most. It was to the effect that the Liberal-Unionists were in consultation with some of the Home-Rule leaders, with reference to a proposed new scheme of Home-Rule. The scheme, as described, seems premature rather than incredible. The more far-seeing of the advocates of Home-Rule for Ireland have from the first foreseen that the enactment of such a measure would be but the prelude to a Home-Rule, or federal system for the other parts of Great Britain. According to the cable-gram, the *Speaker* claims to have found out that a new Liberal-Unionist measure is to be projected based on this federal principle. Local self-government is to be given to England, Scotland and Wales at

the same time as to Ireland, two great Provincial Councils being established in England, and one in each of the other divisions. It is highly improbable that the Liberal-Unionists are as yet prepared to turn their backs on their Conservative allies, who certainly are far from prepared to accept any such measure. It is not unlikely that the *Speaker* has been deceived in this matter, but, should the present scheme miscarry, nothing would be less surprising than to see a new Unionist Home-Rule Bill, under another name, drawn on some such lines as those foreshadowed in the *Speaker* article. Failing to carry their own scheme, the Gladstonians ought to accept such a measure with alacrity, as it involves pretty nearly the same features as their own.

However good his intentions may have been, President Cleveland has not covered himself with glory in the Hawaiian business. When the news of the demand made of the Provisional Government in his name, by Minister Willis, was first announced, we ventured to say that it was incredible that the President would have gone so far, did he not intend to go as much further as might be necessary for the accomplishment of his purpose. The incredible happened. President Dole, of the Provisional Government, having flatly refused to comply with the demand solemnly made in the name of the President of the United States, Mr. Cleveland, realizing, probably, that he had already stretched his constitutional powers to the fullest legitimate extent, if not beyond it, coolly proceeded to hand the matter over to the Senate, and wash his hands of further responsibility. Thus, having got the business into a humiliating muddle, he left the Senators to make the best of it. What they will do remains to be seen. The result of this and other serious blunders, such as that made in the nomination of Mr. Hornblower to the vacancy on the bench of the Supreme Court, have seriously injured President Cleveland's prestige. Nevertheless, it is highly probable that he acted in both cases from good motives. But in the one case it is doubtful whether his strong desire to do what he deemed an act of national justice did not lead him to overstep constitutional bounds. It certainly did lead him to play a double part in his dealings with the Provisional Government. In the matter of the appointments, his real aim, probably, was to set an example of the use of the appointing

power independently of party precedents. But he reckoned without his host in his first nomination, and it is doubtful whether Senatorial jealousy of its patronage may not lead it to refuse its sanction to his second nominee.

Recent cablegrams credit the British Government with the intention of announcing on the re-opening of Parliament a startling naval programme. Their scheme involves, it is said, the commencement this year of an addition to the fleet, the ultimate cost of which is estimated at seventy million of pounds sterling. The magnitude of the figures almost takes away one's breath. And yet, when we consider the enormous cost of a single battle-ship of the latest type, we find that the number of vessels which can be built, even for that vast sum, is not very great after all. Where is this rivalry going to end? France and Russia will no doubt respond to the challenge with fresh efforts, if they are really determined, as they appear to be, to make their combined navies equal or superior to that of Great Britain. But the question is manifestly one neither of costliness, nor of size or number of the ships produced. What kind of ships are to be constructed? That is the main question. Evidence is daily accumulating that some of those new sea-monsters upon which the British Admiralty has placed its chief reliance are likely to prove unseaworthy and unworkable. This means that millions on millions have been expended in experiments which have resulted in failure. What guarantee can the nation have that the next attempt will prove any more successful. That such mistakes should have been made in construction seems almost incredible, since one would suppose it possible to determine beforehand the question of sea-worthiness and other qualities, by means of carefully constructed models, with almost absolute precision. But it seems impossible to dispute the fact. Whether the French and Russian ships are more reliable cannot now be known. The simple truth seems to be that all the maritime powers are spending immense sums in the construction of vessels which the first naval engagement may prove to be unmanageable or otherwise useless, if not self-destructive. The most hopeful feature of the case is that so long as no one can foresee how the new engines of war are going to act in time of trial, all parties will be very slow to enter upon a contest whose possible issue is so uncertain and so fearful.