

# THE WEEK.

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## THE STRUGGLE IN ENGLAND.

MEN who have followed Mr. Gladstone all their lives are shocked at the unscrupulousness of his last manifesto, as they are at the violence of his demagogism, at his appeals to ignorance against education, and his threats of confiscation against Irish landowners who refuse to support him in his scheme of political revolution. He must know perfectly well that he is telling the people an untruth when he declares that there is no alternative to his own scheme but Coercion. He must know, since it has been distinctly and repeatedly brought before him, both in his own Cabinet and elsewhere, that the real alternative is a measure of decentralization and increased local self-government for all the three kingdoms alike, without impairing the Legislative Union or the Supreme Authority of Parliament. Nor can we believe, though he asserts, that Lord Salisbury proposed twenty years of coercion for Ireland. Lord Salisbury made, as I said at the time, a very unwise speech; but what he said that Ireland required was not twenty years of coercion, but twenty years of firm and steady government. Some extraordinary change, say Mr. Gladstone's old friends, has come over his character. What I believe, and what seems to me more probable, the more I see of his conduct and demeanour, is that decay has begun to set in, and that he is possessed with a senile passion for popularity which overcomes all restraints. Instances, I believe, are not uncommon of a senile passion taking possession of an old man in this way without any general loss of faculties or palpable derangement of mind. I think I could point to two within my own experience. If my conjecture is well-founded, the nation, over the masses of which Mr. Gladstone, in the absence of any rival in eloquence and distinction, has acquired so uncontrolled an ascendancy, is in a pleasant situation.

The callous egotism of the old man would otherwise, I confess, move my strong indignation. By trying to keep the whole credit of settling the Irish question to himself and springing upon his friends a plan for which they were unprepared, and from which they dissented, he has shattered a great party, to which he owes his position, which has followed him faithfully, and which has guided constitutional progress, not only in England but in Europe, for two hundred years. For this he cares no more than he would for having broken an earthen pot. His only utterance on the subject is a homily on the duty of following himself. His whole desire is to retain his hold on power by exciting popular passion against all who have refused to support him; whereby, of course, he is widening the breach every hour. Of betraying and ruining the Protestants of Ulster, as they will not do his will, he thinks no more than he would of drowning a litter of puppies. Nor is he in the least disturbed by the fact that he is acting in practical alliance with the avowed enemies of the realm, and that his election fund will be largely drawn from the treasury of American Fenians, who subscribed the money not only for the destruction of the British power, but for the wholesale slaughter of British men, women, and children. When Sir Robert Peel found himself constrained to change his policy and to give up the principles which he had long maintained, he paid, like a man of truly high and noble nature, his tribute to morality. He frankly

avowed his conversion, did justice to those whom he had opposed, resigned office, and did not resume it till the leaders of the other party had failed to form a government. Mr. Gladstone flings his principles of yesterday to the winds without a word of apology. As to resigning office—to retain it seems the only passion of his soul.

ANOTHER thing which might cause a pang to a man who had anything British in his heart is the attitude of all the foreign enemies of Great Britain both in Europe and in the United States. Without exception they are on Mr. Gladstone's side, applaud him with yells of exultation, and heap on his patriotic opponents the same abuse which is heaped on them by the Irish. The voice of French Anglophobia is particularly loud and jubilant. The Italians, on the other hand, who desire to see the influence of Great Britain maintained, are dejected at the prospect of her dismemberment.

THE alliance between Liberal Unionists and Conservatives has up to this time been carried on with good faith on both sides. It is unspeakably welcome as a sign that the public men of England still owe allegiance to a principle higher than Party, and that at a moment of national peril they will lay aside their rivalries and combine to save the country. It seems a rainbow set among the clouds which in dark and stormy masses are gathering round the political horizon of this country; and there is reason even to think that its significance may not be confined to England, but that sensible and patriotic men in all countries may begin to see that Party has been carried too far, and that by it nations are being delivered into the vilest hands.

My impression up to this time has been that the balance of parties and sections was not likely, in the upshot, to be much changed. But I abstain altogether from prediction. Though I think I have as good information as possible, all to me at present is mist and uncertainty. Supposing that Gladstone gains about as much by the Irish vote as he loses by Liberal Secession, and that in that respect the balance remains as it is, the decision will rest with Hodge. Now, I have asked a number of people who ought to know Hodge as well as possible, what he is likely to do, and they all give different answers. One says he will vote for Gladstone because Gladstone promises him three acres and a cow; another that he will vote against Gladstone because Gladstone has not yet given him three acres and a cow; a third, that he will vote against the squire and the parson; a fourth, that he will vote for getting rid of the Irish, which he fancies is the object of the government bill; a fifth, that he will vote for the name of the G. O. M.; a sixth, that nothing about him is certain, except that he will not do this time the same thing that he did last time. All, however, are agreed in thinking that about the momentous issue submitted to him Hodge knows nothing, and his vote will be determined by some totally irrelevant and, probably, irrational motive. The destiny of this great nation might as well be settled by a throw of the dice. That is the appalling fact.

I HAVE been amused by the perusal of Mr. Carnegie's "Triumphant Democracy." One can read Mr. Carnegie with pleasure because he is so evidently sincere and childlike in his democratic faith, and at the same time so good humoured and so free from the wretched American spite against England, at least so far as the people are concerned, though aristocracy anywhere is his bugbear. In American democracy he sees no speck or flaw. Not a rumour of faction, corruption, Tammany, lobbying, log-rolling, wire-pulling, labour disturbances, Molly Maguire outrages, or anything else that is questionable, appears to have reached his ears. But, at all events, American democracy, whatever the merits or faults may be, has only its own fish to fry. It is not called upon, like the masses of electoral ignorance and passion around me, to rule the destinies of a world-wide Empire.

Oxford.

GOLDWIN SMITH.

WHEN Louis XVIII. returned to France, and Fouché was his Minister of Police, the king asked Fouché whether, during his (the king's) exile, he had not set spies over him, and who they were. Fouché hesitated to reply, but on the king insisting, he said: "If Your Majesty presses for an answer, it was the Duc de Blacas to whom this matter was confided."—"And how much did you pay him?" said the King—"Deux cents mille livres de rente, sire."—"Ah, so!" said the King, "then he has played fair; we went halves."