

long step in advance has been taken. Unfortunately the step comes too late. A few years ago a much less liberal measure would have been accepted by most of the Irish people. Now the Government are obliged to act in circumstances that seem to make the Irish problem hopeless of solution. The House of Commons gives a somewhat listless attention to the details of the Home Rule bill, because the feeling is general that, no matter what amendments are made, no matter in what shape the measure comes out of Parliament, it will be little more than a dead letter.

The Irish people have given much evidence that they will do nothing to help Parliament in the matter. The Ulster men do not want the bill. From none of them does it receive a cordial support; from few even a reluctant assent. The Sinn Fein section—unfortunately the apparent majority of the people—will have nothing to do with the measure. The Government will feel bound to carry the bill through Parliament. But how they can hope to put it into operation without the prospect of adding to the present confusion must be a puzzle to them. The once powerful Nationalist party, which was prepared to work out a scheme of constitutional Home Rule within the Empire, has ceased to exist. The extreme conduct of Sir Edward Carson and his Ulster friends gave Ireland over to the control of the Sinn Fein. The one thing apparently that will now suit the majority of the Irish people is the creation of an independent Irish Republic. The people of Great Britain, the people of the British Empire, cannot be expected to assent to the proposal to establish the Republic.

There are limits to the doctrine of self-determination so much talked of now. If every section of an Empire or a nation is free to separate from the rest and set up house-keeping for itself, nationhood becomes an impossibility. In the United States an ocean of blood was shed in successful protest against that doctrine. Every sovereign nation is justified in endeavoring to maintain its unity. If it uses its power to oppress any section of its people there is a world court of public opinion to which the victims can appeal with some prospect of relief. No such condition exists in Ireland. There is the ancient grudge against England, which is not to be met by mere reason. As respects all material things Ireland has no real grievance today. Her economic situation is one of prosperity. She is subject to no injustice that would warrant any other country in taking up her cause.

How then can the British nation be expected to yield to the demand for the setting up of an Irish Republic within gunshot of the shores of England? Nevertheless there are people in England and elsewhere who believe that the granting of such a separation, or at least the offer of a free choice to the Irish people, is the only possible solution of the Irish problem. Indeed,

the suggestion is made that if Ireland is offered such a free choice she will not then want separation. That is the view of the London New Statesman, an advanced Liberal weekly, which says:

"Every one who knows Ireland knows also that if Ireland had been independent, it is hard to conceive any international conflict in which she would not have been our inseparable friend and ally. The tragedy of the present situation lies in the fact that it might be entirely transformed by so small an amount of courage and generosity. If we offer Ireland unconditional freedom we can win her. If we maintain our present indefensible and insensate policy of coercion we shall lose her—perhaps forever. That is the real alternative today. Ireland will never be a willing member of the British Commonwealth until she has been offered the free choice of complete independence if she so wills. We may reasonably attach conditions to the offer. We may insist that no decision shall be taken until a certain, perhaps prolonged, period shall have elapsed—long enough for the passions of today to have burned themselves out. But the ultimate choice must be perfectly free."

One is reminded of the story told in one of Punch's cartoons some years ago. In one of the periods of disturbance among the working men of London the holding of public meetings in Trafalgar Square had been prohibited. Subsequently, a change of Government having occurred, the ban was removed. Jack, meeting his comrade Dick, enquires, "have you heard the news?" "What news?" asks Dick. "I hear," says Jack, "that they will now let us meet in Trafalgar Square." "Will they?" remarks Dick. "Then I won't go."

The London weekly apparently believes it is only because the Irishman is denied a Republic that he wants it, and that if offered to him it will be rejected.

A Government House Question

THE question of the maintenance of a Government House—an official residence for the Governor-General or, as the case may be, the Lieutenant-Governor, has often proved a disturbing one in Canadian politics. The member of radical or ultra-economical views finds in expenditure on such property a tempting subject for criticism. Ottawa's outlay of this kind has not lately been questioned, but there have been times when keen inquiry has been made into such things. When the Farmers' Party is seeking for grounds of criticism it may raise this question as it has already done in the case of the Provincial Government House at Toronto.

The Farmer-Labor Government of Ontario found that it was easier to talk of the waste of money on Government House than to do away with the institution. When the farmers in power began to talk of abolishing the Ontario Government House, the Lieutenant-Governor, in a public speech,

charged them, in effect, with Bolshevism. The Farmers' Government did not resign. Government House still lives.

In New Brunswick some years ago the radical economists made such a fuss over Government House that the Government of the day abolished the hated thing. The buildings were used for other purposes and the Lieutenant-Governor has ever since been left to wander where he pleases in search of a home. In several of the other provinces attacks were made on Government House, but without success.

In Prince Edward Island a peculiar situation has arisen. In Charlottetown, Government House has not for some years occupied as prominent a place in the social world as in the olden time. In war-time the buildings were turned over to the military authorities for hospital purposes, and a private house was taken for the Governor's use. The war being over, and the buildings available for other purposes, it is suggested that they might usefully be converted into a summer hotel. In furtherance of this movement the Government introduced and carried through the Legislature a bill giving them the right to dispose of the property. This bill the Lieutenant-Governor has declined to sign; it is "reserved for the pleasure of His Excellency the Governor-General."

This is not the first time that the right of a Provincial Government to dispose of a Government House has been called in question. While the point, we believe, has never been judicially determined, there is much ground for the opinion that the title—in the case of such property held by provinces before the passing of the Confederation Act—is in the Dominion and not in the Provinces. Under the Confederation Act all property whatsoever belonging to the provinces was vested in the Dominion, subject, however, to a reservation of certain property for Provincial purposes. It is claimed that under this provision the occupation of Government House is reserved to the Provincial Government, who are free to use it for any Provincial purpose, but not free to dispose of it. It is probably on this ground that the Lieutenant-Governor of Prince Edward Island has declined to sign a bill designed to enable the Government to sell the property.

The refusal of a Lieutenant-Governor to assent to a bill promoted by his constitutional advisers is such an unusual event that it is likely to attract much notice. It implies a disagreement between the Crown's representative and his advisers, which in most cases must lead to the resignation of the Ministry. In this case, for the reason we have given, the Governor may have a ground for his action. The pity is that the whole matter was not frankly discussed between the Governor and his Ministers at the beginning, and that they did not refrain from pressing in the Legislature a bill that he was not prepared to sign.