

England's Election Crisis.

HOW THE GREAT WAR WAS WAGED— TARIFF REFORM VICTORIES.

LONDON, January 21.

THE tide of the General Election of 1910 has flowed steadily in favour of the Unionists, but it is practically a certainty to-day — if anything is certain in politics — that it is impossible for the Tariff Reform party to gain sufficient seats to command a majority in the Parliament that is to be over the combined forces of Liberalism, Labour, Socialism, and the Irish party.

It is also decidedly improbable that the Liberal party will be "Masters in their own house"—that is, for the Government to be independent of the support of the Irish party. Unless all the portents are hopelessly wrong, the official Liberals will not have half the seats in the new House, and the most optimistic of their partisans do not predict for the Liberal Government a majority of more than 83. This was the number of seats held in the last Parliament by the Irish party, and it is practically certain that they will return as many members to the new Parliament. Thus a future Liberal Government would be absolutely at the mercy of the Irish party. It could be defeated not merely by an adverse vote, but by the Irish refraining from voting, as they did in one notable instance during the last Parliament.

The outlook is certainly disquieting, and to-day people are asking whether we have gone through all this political turmoil in order to enthroned the Irish party as dictators in the new Parliament.

At the time of writing it certainly looks like it, and the chances of another general election within the space of a few months appear to be distinctly rosy. The polling throughout the country has been very heavy up to date, no less than 83.1 per cent of the total electorate having recorded their votes, as against 82.3 in 1906.

The main features of the election have been the great increase in the Unionist and the reduction in the Socialist votes.

The following tables give the total number of electors who had polled in the 319 English, Welsh, and Scotch constituencies, the returns for which were available this morning, compared with the number of votes recorded in the same constituencies in 1906.

	1910.	1906.	Diff. 'n
Unionist	1,482,144	1,239,612	+242,532
Liberal	1,296,883	1,193,749	+103,134
Socialist	261,538	320,230	-58,679

Here are a few results in point:—

	Majority.	Majority.
	1906.	1910.
	Liberal.	Unionist.
Junderland	5741	845
Preston	2878	3978
Portsmouth	2530	4380
Greenwich	3342	1204
Chatham	2972	1281
Kent, Tonbridge	1283	3210
Middlesex, Brentford	453	3850

During the election there have been some very remarkable "turnovers," chiefly in favour of the Unionists.

FIRST BLOOD TO TARIFF REFORM.

The opposing political forces came to grips on Saturday, when 74 constituencies were polled. Of these at the dissolution, the Liberals held no less than 66, but as the result of the day's fight they lost 18, and only gained 3, leaving the Unionists to rejoice over a net gain of 15 seats, three of their gains being in London.

On Monday 104 seats were at stake, and the Unionists, by winning 48 of them, made a net gain of 14 seats. They also had the best of the argument in those constituencies where the representatives remained unchanged, for they increased their majority in 20 constituencies and decreased Liberal majorities in 24. On the other hand the Liberals only reduced the Unionist majorities in 6 cases, and increased their own in 12.

WILL CROOKS' DEFEAT.

The most notable feature of the day's work was the rejection of your recent

visitor, Mr. Will Crooks, by Woolwich, and the defeats of Sir John Gorst, Mr. Harold Cox, and Mr. Jebb.

Mr. Crooks at the last election secured a majority of 2112, and though his friends were somewhat afraid that his lengthy absence from his constituency would operate against him to some extent, few imagined that he would fail to again defeat the Unionist candidate, Major Adams. However, the Labour member failed to keep pace with his opponent, and on a poll of 17,135 out of a possible 18,438 he was beaten by 293 votes, the turnover in favour of his rival being no less than 2407.

In Battersea Mr. John Burns had a very stiff fight against the Unionist, Mr. A. S. Benn, his majority of 1600 in 1906 being reduced to 535.

Mr. Augustine Birrell, the only other Cabinet Minister to face the music on Monday, retained his seat at North Bristol, but his majority was reduced by nearly 1800.

As usual, the City of London remained faithful to its traditions, and returned the two Unionists who represented it in the last Parliament, namely, the Rt. Hon. A. J. Balfour and Sir F. Banbury. They were returned unopposed in 1906, but this time Sir H. Bell unexpectedly threw down the gauntlet on behalf of Free Trade. His chance from the outset was hopeless.

One peculiarly interesting contest on Monday was that at Portsmouth, where Lord Charles Bessford and Mr. Bertram Falle stood for the cause of a strong navy and Tariff Reform, and won two seats for their party by substantial majorities involving a turnover of nearly 7000 votes from the 1906 figures.

RADICAL REBUFFS.

On Tuesday polling took place in 50 constituencies, with the result that the Tariff Reformers captured 15 seats, as against the Liberals' 2. In those cases where the representations remained unchanged the Radical majorities were decreased in 13 instances and increased in 5, whilst the Opposition had largely increased majorities in 5 constituencies and only three majorities reduced.

The severest rebuff received by the Liberals was perhaps the defeat of Mr. Causton in West Southwark, a seat he has held for the Liberals since 1883, and a constituency that has been consistently Liberal for 30 years.

Against this loss, however, the Liberals could well place the re-capture of Sickle Bermondsey, which at the recent by-election returned the Tariff Reformer, Mr. Dumphreys, by a majority of 987. On Tuesday Mr. Dumphreys was decisively beaten by 969 votes, the turnover in the Liberal favour being 1956!

Of the prominent members of the late Government who polled on Tuesday, Mr. Winston Churchill greatly increased his majority at Dundee, as did Mr. Runciman at Dewsbury, but Colonel Seeley, Under-Secretary for the Colonies, was "among the slain." Colonel Chalmers turning a Unionist deficit of 199 to a Tariff Reform majority of 529 in the Abercromby division of Liverpool.

Of other Ministers who polled, Mr. Sydney Buxton had his majority reduced in Poplar by over 1000, Sir Wm. Robson's fell in South Shields by more than 2000, and Mr. J. A. Dewar, the Scottish Solicitor-General, lost 1526 votes in Edinburgh.

LONDON WAVERING.

On Wednesday only 32 results were declared, and the Unionists could boast the capture of four seats, including one in Denbigh, where the Liberal member, Mr. Clement Edwards, lost his seat by 8 votes to the Hon. Ormsby-Gore, the turnover of votes being 581 or about 12 per cent. of the electors who polled. The result was most unexpected by the Radicals, who had looked forward most confidently to retaining every Welsh seat.

The results in these constituencies where the representation remained unchanged shows that whilst the Unionists only show increased votes in one place—Ealing to wit—the Liberals had increased in nine. Against this may be

set the fact that whereas only one Tariff Reformer had his majority decreased, no less than fourteen of the successful Liberals were returned with reduced majorities ranging from 40 in Central Hackney to 1639 at Birkenhead.

Among the results received on Wednesday was that of the first contested election in Ireland. This resulted in a personal triumph for Mr. Wm. O'Brian, who was returned at the head of the poll for Cork City, but lost his henchman, Mr. Maurice Healy. It will be remembered that Mr. O'Brian resigned his seat last year after his last quarrel with Mr. Redmond, and was replaced by Mr. Maurice Healy.

Mr. O'Brian and Mr. Healy stood again for the two seats in opposition to the two Redmonds and Sir Edward Fitzgerald, an ex-Lord Mayor of Cork, who called himself an Independent Nationalist. One of the Redmonds, Mr. Augustine Roche, was returned with Mr. O'Brian.

Wednesday saw the completion of London pollings, the net result thereof being the return of 33 Unionists against 26 Liberals. This, of course, is a big turnover on the "Annus Mirabilis" for Liberalism—1906—when 40 of the metropolitan seats were captured by the party, but the Unionists have failed entirely to "sweep London" as they did in 1906 when the Liberals only secured 8 seats out of 59. The Unionists indeed are not so well off as in 1885, for then they represented 36 London constituencies and their opponents 23.

HENNIKER HEATON'S NARROW ESCAPE.

On Thursday the result of Wednesday's polling in the County divisions came to hand, and gave joy to the heart of the Tariff Reformers. No less than 13 Liberal seats had been won in the provinces, and the Liberals who managed to retain their seats found their majorities whittled down in alarming fashion. The turnover of votes in some constituencies was tremendous. At Brentford, for example, it was 4309, and at Tonbridge 4493.

Against the run of Unionist victories the Liberals could not set a single success, and on Thursday night the total number of seats won from them had reached 71, whilst the total number of seats captured from the Unionists was only 10.

Among the members returned yesterday was our old friend Mr. Henniker Heaton, who had sat for Canterbury since 1885. He had a very narrow escape of losing his seat owing to the opposition of Mr. Bennett Goldney, who put himself forward as an Independent Unionist, and thus provoked a triangular contest, which might have cost the Unionist the seat had the Liberal candidate been a strong man. As it was the Unionist had plenty of votes in hand, and though the party was fairly divided the Liberals did not poll within 500 of either Unionist candidate. A close contest between Mr. Heaton and Mr. Goldney resulted in a victory for "the Member for Australia" by the narrow margin of 21 votes.

ELECTORAL ANOMALIES.

One thing the present election must have impressed upon the minds of all dispassionate observers, and that is the crying need of a new Redistribution Bill. When we find that constituencies like Wandsworth, with over 38,000 voters on the register, have only the same Parliamentary influence as constituencies with less than 4000 voters, it makes one wonder. Yet Wandsworth has only one member, and her 38,000 voters have no more "say" in the management of the Empire than the 2021 electors of Newry, Ireland; i.e., one Irish elector has nearly as much voting in Parliament as 19 Englishmen resident in the borough of Wandsworth.

Similar gross anomalies are to be found on every hand. Lewisham, with over 25,000 voters on the list, returns only one member, and has no more power in Parliament than South Kildare (4958), North Longford (3623), or North Kilkenny (4847).

Cardiff is in an even worse plight, for her 28,723 voters carry no more weight in Parliament than the 5000 electors of Denbigh, and only half the weight of the 23,000 electors of Merthyr Tydfil.

Ealing and Hornsey, two Middlesex constituencies, with over 25,000 and 23,000 voters respectively, have to be content with one M.P. each, the voters of the electors in these divisions representing only about a fifth of the value of those of the free and enlightened electors of Elgin,

N.B., and about one-ninth of those of the electors of Bury St. Edmunds.

The next striking contrast, however, is afforded by the Romford division of Essex and Kilkenny City. In the former constituency there are over 51,000 electors on the poll, but they are represented in Parliament by one man, as in Kilkenny City, with a registered electorate of 1700. Thus, one Irish vote given in Kilkenny has the same influence in Imperial politics as 30 English votes registered in the County of Essex. Another injustice to Ireland! Essex and Kilkenny may be further contrasted. In the various divisions of Essex there are on the electoral rolls no less than 174,000 voters returning 8 members; in Kilkenny there are only 11,700 voters all told, and they return 3 members. The proper proportion for Essex on the Irish basis would be about 44 members, or, reversing the process, Kilkenny's portion on the Essex basis would be a little over half a member. Practically every voter in Kilkenny exercises the same power in Parliament as 15 Essex electors.

At the present time England and Wales has only one member of Parliament for about every 12,000 electors, Scotland one for every 10,500, and Ireland one for every 6700 electors, the average over the whole United Kingdom being approximately one M.P. for every 11,000 electors.

On this basis, instead of sending 103 members to the House of Commons, Ireland should only return about 63.

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