

## CLIFFORD LLOYD ON THE POLITICAL NECESSITIES IN IRELAND.

THE following is the Dublin *Freeman's* summarised version of the paper contributed by Mr. Clifford Lloyd, R.M., to the London *Times* :—

The time is rapidly approaching when it will be necessary to take into serious consideration the present political situation in Ireland; and to come to some decision in devising means whereby the peace and order to be secured in that country may give hope for a tranquillity more lasting than periodical Coercion Acts afford, and for a prosperity, which with the maintenance of the law, can only be secured by the co-operation and good will of the people. The Irish of to-day are not the Irish of even five years ago, and any attempt at legislation or at government that does not realise this fact is certain to produce much disappointment. If remedial legislation has failed to realise the hopes entertained, the cause is likely to be found in the determination of the people to keep the country in an unsettled condition until some serious effort is made to satisfy their political aspirations. Throughout the length and breadth of Ireland a great democratic wave of thought has passed over the people, and it has left results which are not only likely to be lasting, but which must be fully and immediately realised if any clear and just conception is to be arrived at concerning the solution of the important—I may say vital—questions now ripening with reference to the future of the Irish people and the continued unity of the kingdom. If the hastily-created and rough-and-ready organisation of the Land League in its earlier days was powerful in its grasp upon the people, the present organisation of the National League is infinitely more so. In every town and almost every village in Ireland a branch exists. Experience has consolidated and familiarity with danger emboldened it. Originally the Land League assumed jurisdiction only in matters relating to the soil, but the National League of to-day puts no limit to its attributions. It censures the Viceroy one day and a village constable the next. It reviews the decisions of the highest courts, dictates to the municipal bodies, practically elects every representative of the people, whether to the boards of guardians or to the Imperial Parliament, and its last display of assumed power was a direction to the Irish people as to how they were to conduct themselves on the occasion of the visit of their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales to the country. When three or four millions of people are willing to submit themselves to the irresponsible dominion of such a rule as this, placing themselves at the same time in open defiance to every constituted authority in the land—when, notwithstanding diminished local trade, absence of peace and lack of security, taxation for extra police, blood moneys levied, and the score of funds to which they are cabled upon to subscribe, they continue with the secrecy of the ballot, to elect as their Parliamentary representatives those who are pledged to continue an agitation which has now been rending the country for nearly five years, with the full knowledge that the present conduct of affairs may very possibly end in a bloody revolution, it is at least time, in my opinion, to consider calmly and fully whether there is any just ground for the bitter complaints raised as to the government of the country being throughout its machinery entirely out of harmony with the feelings and reasonable aspirations of a free people, and, if so, whether it is possible to introduce changes likely to lead to future unity, concord, and prosperity. It is quite unnecessary to touch upon the political problems that would spring into existence with an Irish Republic. Though there may be in Ireland persons wild enough to dream of the possibility of an independent Ireland, there are few in England of any shade of political feeling who will be found prepared to enter into the consideration even of such a generally recognised impossibility. There is, however, another form of government suggested as a panacea for the sufferings of the Irish people, and this is known by the name of Home Rule. It has many advocates in both England and Ireland, but the Home Rule movement has always suffered from the great disadvantage of never having been defined with any attempt at precision. To all it, at least, conveys the idea of a Parliament sitting in Dublin. That is unquestionably the base of the proposition, and an accepted starting point in the mind of every advocate of the Home Rule cause, however moderate or extreme may be his political opinions. Without a Parliament in Dublin there could be no Home Rule, and yet it is this very fact that renders *Home Rule an absolute impossibility*. There may be Munster Home Rule or Connaught Home Rule, but there can never be Irish Home Rule so long as there is an Ulster peopled as at present. The Northerners are essentially characterised by their unqualified loyalty to the Crown, unwavering resolution to link their destiny with Great Britain, by their self-reliance, energy, prosperity, and a deep-rooted intolerance of the teaching of the Roman Church. It is generally admitted by those conversant with the feeling of the north that the Protestant artisans of Belfast and farmers of Down, Antrim, Armagh, and other loyal counties would under no circumstances submit to be ruled from Dublin by a Home Rule Government and Parliament. Home Rule would mean civil war, and it is well that future legislators should understand this. But because an Irish Parliament in Collegegreen is considered the dream of a few imaginative and sanguine Irishmen, is any reason established for allowing the fire of revolution to smoulder on from month to month and year to year, only to be blown into the blaze of rebellion by the first favourable gust of wind? A young generation is growing up bred in the very air of sedition and treason, which would not be possible but for the want of foresight in governing, the dissensions of party, and the unfortunate habit of waiting for events in affairs connected with Ireland. It will be indeed strange if the rising generation of Irishmen in the middle and lower classes do not turn out to be rebels of the most approved type. The teaching is all one way, and it will be difficult to be aught else. It will be found that those who claim to speak with authority assign two great causes for the discontent still prevalent in Ireland, notwithstanding the immense concessions made to the people upon the land question. The first is the exclusion of the people from any share in the management of their own affairs. The second is the existence in Dublin of a centralised Government alleged to be out of

touch with the Imperial Parliament, with the British Cabinet, and with the Irish people. I cannot too strongly put forward my matured opinion, formed after years of residence and of official life in both the north and the south, that a fierce and bloody contest would be the result of instituting a Parliament in Dublin. But there is a means of meeting practically the just demands of the Irish people, which would not only preserve the unity of the kingdom, but, when wounds had time to heal, would give it a strength and reality hitherto unknown by bringing peace and contentment, and therefore security and prosperity, to Ireland. I allude to the creation of elective county boards, with power to administer the local funds and all matters relating to the public works, the asylums, hospitals, roads, poor-law rates, etc. On this base there is room to build. There is here unlimited scope for the growth of politic life. Short of the administration of justice, the preservation of order, and the imposition of taxation, these being imperial attributes, every power of initiative and of general local control should be conferred upon such a body. At the present moment, whether in town or country, the Irish of the south and west are hostile critics of proceedings in which they have much interest but play no part. Such a field as I have indicated would supply subjects for consideration and discussion among themselves; it would divert the thoughts of the people out of a hitherto endless vein of conspiracy and sedition, and it would make the Irish at least feel that they were the component part of a great political system, and a living useful portion of a free people. These institutions would create political life and provide a field for its rapid expansion. I see no reason why delegates from those county assemblies interested should not meet in committee, as required, to discuss questions relating to proposed railways, harbours, means of navigation, and other matters in which more than one county might be interested. In considering how to invigorate and popularise the government of Ireland let us beware of accepting, as a foundation on which to work, the theories or the fancies of enthusiasts. Above all, let us be practical. Let us not make an exception as regards Ireland to the principles upon which the United Kingdom in general is governed. These consist in the administration of the country at large by the great departments of State, with one Imperial National Parliament, to which all are responsible and where laws are made, modified, and repealed according to the requirements of the community. Once we go outside these broad lines we know not whither it may be led. County government already exists, and what is proposed is only to make it representative. Putting aside all questions of a peronal nature, let us consider whether maintaining the office of Lord Lieutenant in Ireland provides a form of executive suitable to the people and to the day in which we live. I confess to the opinion that it does not. The office of Lord Lieutenant in its Sovereign representation is an indication of personal power no longer existing, while as suggesting the administration in Ireland it is the emblem of a centralised bureaucratic system condemned by experience in every country, even under the most Imperial of Governments. An administration into the workings of which the public eye cannot penetrate, which owing to surrounding circumstances is, to a great extent, free from Parliamentary control, and that rarely feels the invigorating effect of the introduction of new blood, has a natural tendency to deteriorate into a state of centralised stagnation. Stagnation in any form and in any country is always painful to witness, but to the intelligent observer stagnation, in whatever form, in Ireland presents an aspect peculiarly unhealthy, distressing to witness, and seemingly hopeless.

It seems to me, however, that there is no room in Ireland for a Viceroy under a constitutional Government. In Canada there is a Viceroy representing the Sovereign as a part of the local constitution. In India there is a Viceroy representing the Sovereign ruling the Empire. The Sovereign at the present day does not rule Ireland personally, and there is no local constitution. In India there is a Viceroy representing the local constitution. The position is an anomaly. The Sovereign is not supposed to display any leaning to this or to that party in the state, but in Ireland the representative of the Crown is not only the chosen representative of the political party in power, but is also, as a rule, one of its most distinguished supporters in the House of Lords.

The people of Ireland say that they detested the late Government, but are not disloyal to the Crown. It is the privilege of a loyal people to show their dissatisfaction with a Government or with any particular Minister, but in Ireland if this is done the people are said to be disloyal and to be insulting the Sovereign. The Viceroyalty in Ireland seems also to perpetuate the idea of a separate kingdom, inferior to that over which the Sovereign rules in person. Now Ireland is part of one kingdom, and it would be as unsound in principle to have a Viceroy of England as a Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Is it desirable to perpetuate an idea which since the Union has been a fiction, which confounds the Sovereign with politics, and which strains the Constitution of the country to an extent alarming to every sober-minded person?

Presuming that such a form of county government as I have described should come into operation and that the office of Lord Lieutenant should be abolished, the question arises, who is to do the work now performed by the Viceroy and in what manner is the Imperial Government generally to be carried on? The answer to this is that my scheme does not seek to destroy, but to construct. The Sovereign it is hoped, would come in person, or by a Royal representative, to frequently perform these social duties which are so conducive to the well-being of the people, but it would be necessary to vest in a Secretary of State those executive functions now pertaining to the Lord Lieutenant.

It will, in my opinion, be a mistake to have a Secretary of State, especially for Ireland, for the affairs of which I believe at present the Home Secretary is constitutionally responsible. If there are no cogent reasons for his becoming so in fact as well as in theory, there are forcible arguments in favour of my suggestion. In the first place all that goes to blend the government of the two countries is good as strengthening the unity of the kingdom, while the tendency of having a distinct Secretary of State for Ireland would be to per-