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## Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

**SIGNS OF FAILURE.** WE have already heard a good deal respecting the inconsistency and weakness of the Tory Government, in consenting to the revision of the judicial rents.

The nature of the step thus taken, as well as the readiness of the Liberal-Unionists to sacrifice everything to their opposition to the Irish cause, seems to us, however, to be more clearly explained in the following passage from the *St. James's Gazette*, an ultra-Tory newspaper, than in anything we had previously seen. The fear awakened in the Tory camp by the betrayal of the Government's weakness and the complete want of principle that characterises the unholy alliance between Tories and Liberal-Unionists may be plainly read between the lines. The *Gazette* is referring to the speech made by Lord Hartington at the Greenwich banquet:—"It appears from another portion of Lord Hartington's speech, that if Lord Salisbury and Mr. Goschen believed that to revise judicial rents in Ireland was neither expedient nor honest, the Liberal-Unionist leaders were not desirous of revision either. 'I am ready to admit,' says Lord Hartington, 'that we believed and hoped it would not be necessary in the present session, to adopt a principle so full of risk and danger, so pregnant with possible inconvenience and difficulty in the way of passing a great land scheme for Ireland, as the principle of the revision of judicial rents payable by solvent tenants. But the change was made, and no doubt it was made under a belief that it has become necessary, if the consolidation of the Liberal-Unionists and Conservatives was not to be interrupted. But it has not had that result. There is nothing to show that this surrender of judgment—we think of justice too—has pleased many Liberals in the country. None of the many Liberals of whom Mr. Goschen is the representative can like it, or be anything else than disgusted with it; while as for the Conservatives, it is unnecessary to inform anyone who knows the state of feeling amongst them, that what thousands of their number regard as a compulsory surrender of principle is strongly resented. Now, whatever the facts or the merits of the case may be, that does not make for concord; there is no continuance of consolidation here. Yet Lord Hartington—speaking, we presume, for the Conservative-Unionist leaders as well as for the Liberal-Unionist chiefs—promises that before next session they will place before the country a policy of reform and of progress, which shall at the same time tend to consolidate the union of the Unionist party, to secure and establish the maintenance of the Union, and to confer upon our country benefits for which it has long been waiting, and for which, but some policy of this kind, it may have long to wait. It is a noble endeavour, and we should rejoice if it does not turn out to be undertaken a little too soon."

**DR. TANNER**, who lately distinguished himself in a SLIP OF THE TONGUE OR TWO, with a Tory member, in which he used language that was rather more energetic than complimentary is, nevertheless, by no means to be taken for a wild uncultured native from the bogs, to whom the accidents of nationalism alone threw open the doors of Parliament. The doctor notwithstanding a slip of the tongue, or rather two or three consecutive slips, one more energetic than another, and into which he was betrayed by what was most probably an intentionally provoking intrusion at a moment of irritation, is a cultured and genial gentleman, whose social position has always been recognised. It was, perhaps, at a celebrated English school, that he acquired an over-ready use in moments of irritation of the expletive that, from time immemorial, has characterised the English people, and even placed a nick-name for them on the tongues of foreigners, for among the colleges at which Dr. Tanner obtained his education was that at Winchester. He also studied at Leipzig and Berlin, as well as at the Queen's College in his native city of Cork. If Dr. Tanner swears, therefore, he may be accredited with swearing, as the old saying is, like a lord, for his antecedents are of high social standing, and half the odium which he incurs may be looked upon as due to enmity, which pursues one who is accused of being a deserter from the party with which birth and education

might be considered as identifying him. The doctor, in short, is a convert to the national cause, for which the sights that met his eyes, and all the circumstances in which, on due consideration, he found his native land, won his sympathies. With all the zeal of a sincere convert, he now supports and advocates that cause, and the vigour with which he encounters the Tories, whose position he thoroughly understands, is one of the features in the opposition of the Home Rulers which most disconcerts them, and which they resent as most vexatious. This feeling against the doctor should be known in calculating as to the chances that the interview in which he particularly distinguished himself was forced upon him for the purpose of picking a quarrel. But, if it was so, the triumph gained was but momentary, and the satisfaction fleeting, for the frankness with which Dr. Tanner acknowledged his fault and the evident sincerity of his regret for his passing forgetfulness, have rather won admiration for him than anything else.

**MR. DAVITT**, who lately presided at a lecture delivered by Mr. O. H. Oldham on the Flax Industry of Ireland, took occasion to speak at considerable length on the all-important subject of the encouragement of Irish Industries generally, and

the way in which it might best be promoted. The subject, however, which chiefly engaged his attention was what had also formed the theme of the lecturer, that is flax-growing and the manufacture of linen, the only great branch of industry for which Ireland has been distinguished during the present century. The industry, however, as the speaker showed, has been by no means so fully carried out as it might have been, and especially the matter of flax-growing has been neglected in a very faulty manner. Mr. Davitt, nevertheless, does not bring this before the public for the first time. It has, in fact, been for many years one of the questions that attention has been periodically directed to, and it may well be brought forward, as Mr. Davitt indeed made use of it, as one of the most powerful pleas that can be urged in favour of Home Rule. It is evident that nothing but a government whose interest was principally that of developing the resources of the country, and providing as their first duty for its progress and welfare, could effectually deal with a question such as this which has been conclusively proved by frequent failure as beyond the reach of private solution. That the industry is a most important one cannot be doubted, nor is it doubtful that Ireland is exceptionally qualified by nature to give it the fullest development of which it is capable. The encouragement of this branch of industry, as well as of the woollen manufactures, for which the country is also especially adapted, as Mr. Davitt pointed out, would form most worthy occupation for a native legislature. He deprecated altogether the notion that the industries were antagonistic, and reproved alike the mistaken nationalist who resisted encouragement to the linen trade, as that historically associated with the destruction in the last century of the woollen trade, and the anti-nationalist who feared that a national parliament would unduly favour the revival of the woollen industry. The equal promotion of both, Mr. Davitt showed to be the true policy that needed to be carried out for the common benefit of the country, giving them the preference as those for which Ireland was especially adapted. Three millions of money it seems, for example, every year are sent to foreign countries for the flax seed needed in the United Kingdom, and of this every ounce might under a proper system of management be produced in Ireland. It may perhaps, seem rather paradoxical, but one of the most hopeful considerations in connection with the Irish question is that of the bad management which now so generally prevails. In fact, when the matter is properly looked into, the settlement of the agrarian question becomes by no means the only one that seems imperative. Independent of this, and yet in some way connected with it, are many other questions, every one of which needs solution, but to the solution of every one of which most hopeful expectations are attached. It is not a mere matter of giving to the farming classes land at rents which they can afford to pay, or even totally free from rent, but so that they should still be subject to suffer from the variations of the seasons, or the effects of foreign competition, or, perhaps, even condemned still to poverty arising from the growth of excessive population. There are abundant resources at hand, to whose development a right settlement of the agrarian question may, indeed