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## Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

### IRISH GLEANINGS.

THE Pope is reported as having expressed, in an audience granted to the Archbishop of Armagh, a hope that the Irish Home Rule cause would triumph.

It would almost seem as if his Holiness desired to contradict the slander recently published, to the effect that Dr Logue was to be preferred as Cardinal to Dr Walsh, owing to the political attitude of the latter. The Pope, however, hardly troubles himself about such rumours, even if they reach his ears.

What can be the deep and mystic significance of this?—"Mr John Morley, Chief Secretary for Ireland, is removing a large number of governors of lunatic asylums and replacing them by Roman Catholics."—Does Mr Morley contemplate the conversion of Protestant madmen? If so, his mission is unique. But judging from what occasionally takes place in Ulster, partiality only could confine it to the lunatic asylums.—There, perhaps, Mr Morley hopes to find catechumens more docile if not less irrational.

The Archbishop of Dublin has been examined before the Evicted Tenants' Commission. His Grace showed a wonderfully minute acquaintance with the whole course of the National movement, and particularly with relation to the statistics of land valuation, both old and new, was accurately informed and ready in a degree hardly credible. Sir James Mathew made his astonishment evident. The special subject of the Archbishop's examination was the case of the Coolgreany tenants, whom he had personally visited, and whom he supported fully, showing the justice of their demand for a reduction of 30 per cent and of their refusal of the terms offered at length by the landlord. He gave it as his opinion that the essential element of any settlement to be made in the country must be the reinstatement of the evicted people. The right of eviction he characterised as an anachronism, involving, as it did, the confiscation of the property of the tenant—recognised, since the Land Act of '81, as a part-owner. He claimed that rents should be regulated with reference to the price of produce and periodically readjusted—the longest interval being five years. His Grace also pronounced resolutely for the removal from evicted holdings of even *bona fide* planters, compensation being made in all such cases to the parties removed. The testimony of the Archbishop spoke eloquently of the heart and intellect of the illustrious witness, and should go far in recommending a favourable settlement of the question to every honest man.

Among the statistics quoted by the Archbishop, were those of the reductions of rent made for all Ireland by the Land Commission in the years 1881-5, inclusive. These were as follows:—Ulster, 20·7; Leinster, 17·8; Connaught, 20·1; Munster, 18·4. What we would point out is that in Ulster the reductions were the largest made. Ulster, therefore, had profited most by the agitation, against which her Orange population have so wildly and violently protested. But, even Orangemen, it seems, can feel the pinch of distress, and are anxious to take advantage of such relief as offers itself to them. Unionist farmers are now everywhere meeting together for the purpose of demanding further reductions, to suit the necessities of the times. How can they consistently refuse to acknowledge the benefits of a movement, failing which they might make their demand in vain, or even perceive the uselessness of making it at all?

The result of the South Meath petition has been hailed with great rejoicing and loud boasts by the Unionists. They see in the separation between priests and people, which they hope will result, the most powerful bar to the success of the National movement. But, if ever any one were justified in interference, Dr Nulty and his clergy were so on this occasion. Violent demonstrations against religion had been made, and strong language was called for in rebuking them and exposing the party responsible for them. Judge O'Brien, the senior judge, besides, was palpably prejudiced. His judgment bears every proof of such a frame of mind. "He (the learned judge) could not understand," he said, "why the conduct of a voter in respect to the election of a Member of Parliament should be a matter of religion." But surely the learned judge did injustice to his understand-

ing. He plainly set aside the evidence of the priests as unworthy of credit—accepting in preference that of witnesses far less reliable. The Unionists, meantime, are making the best use of their opportunity, to impress upon English electors how incapable are the Irish people of self-government. Disfranchisement, indeed, it is urged, would be the logical course to pursue, but, since this is impracticable, it is, at least, necessary to restrain them still within narrow bounds. Had the Parnellites been in league with the enemies of Home Rule, they could hardly have struck a more telling blow in assisting them.

In a letter to the *Daily News*, Mr Foulkes Griffiths, who appeared as counsel on the occasion, quotes, in support of Sir James Mathew, the precedent of Lord Balfour. Lord Balfour, presiding at the Welsh Royal Commission as to Sunday closing in 1889, had rejected an application made by counsel to cross-examine. Such a course, he said under the circumstances, would be absolutely without precedent. The Commissioners at the time consisted of four Tories and one Liberal.

Mr Carson, Q.C., who lately distinguished himself by "cheeking" Sir James Mathew, has gained a still further note of distinction. In speaking at a Unionist banquet given a week or two afterwards, he followed the fortunes of the Home Rule Bill through all its successful stages in the House of Commons. "And if eventually," he cried, "the House of Lords, even after years of struggle, should in an evil hour attempt to legalise this revolution, and thereby put an end to all justification or reason for their own existence, Loyalists must once more fall behind the walls of Derry, and proceed to carry out the resolutions, solemnly adopted at the recent great convention in Belfast."—Was it not once found necessary to defend King Charles II. against himself?—There, then, is the ultimate authority of the Empire—the "Loyalists."—But, whether after dinner or before it, the future must decide.

In a speech made by him at the Eighty Club some weeks since, the Marquis of Ripon alluded to the manner in which Sir James Mathew and the Evicted Tenants' Commission had been dealt with. It was not the criticisms of Tory speakers, he said, nor even that of the Tory Press, that could touch the reputation of Mr Justice Mathew. He thought that if some of those speakers who were indulging in such language should happen to recollect the history of another Commission, they would experience a pang in remembering the respectful attitude towards it of the Liberal party. The allusion, we need hardly say, was to the Parnell Commission—which, indeed, met with very different treatment from that accorded by its opponents to the Commission now sitting.

Messrs Dillon and O'Brien have written to call attention to the cruelty of the evictions now taking place in Mayo. Mr O'Brien deals especially with those on the estate of Lord Sligo. He expresses a strong desire for the presence of a special correspondent who could make England listen. If Englishmen once realised the true condition of affairs, he says, "I venture to affirm Tory politicians would have less enthusiasm for the future in the game of baiting Mr Morley by putting the Irish landlords on their mettle." "The Mayo landlords," he concludes, "are possessed by a spirit which can only be restrained from deeds which will bear an evil harvest by being taught that public opinion is awakening to their ill-omened work, and that the Tory Opposition have even more than the Home Rule Government to dread from Irish landlords' misconduct during this terrible winter."

OUR contemporary the *Dunedin Star* bases high ODDS AND ENDS, hopes on the ill health of Mr Ballance, for which, of course, he is very sorry—*ça va sans dire*. He sees a chance, however, for the Opposition and that in his eyes atones for a good deal. But why they should be an Opposition, if our contemporary describes them correctly, it is difficult to see. He tells us there is very little of the Conservative about any of them, that Mr Rolleston, their leader, is a regular Radical, where the land is concerned, holding the identical views of Mr John M'Kenzie, that he is ready to trump the labour cards of the present Ministry and to include in his Cabinet a direct representative of the working classes. All this is very interesting and even curious. Meantime the labour party may hold up their heads. There is money bid for them. Whether they will accept the traditional invitation of the spider to