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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

MR. PARNELL'S resolution to refrain from defending himself in the O'Shea divorce case was taken as an acknowledgment on his part of guilt. His particular followers, the National party, and the Irish people generally, nevertheless, did not at once renounce their allegiance to him. A meeting of the Home Rule party, on the contrary, was held in Dublin, at which, for example, Mr. Justin McCarthy, who had come there, he said, at great personal inconvenience, spoke strongly in favour of a renewal of confidence, at which Mr. Healy, since very differently reported of, was outspoken and even eloquent in his declaration of an unaltered and unalterable fidelity, and where there was a strong and unanimous expression of opinion in support of Mr. Parnell's continued leadership—though no one attempted to make an excuse for or palliate his offence against morals. The tone of the National Press, with the important exception of Mr. Michael Davitt's paper, the *Labour World*, was to the same effect, and, all through Ireland, meetings were held and other means adopted of expressing an unaffected allegiance. A vote of confidence, nevertheless, proposed by Messrs. Healy and Lane, M.P.'s, at a meeting in Cork, was rejected, and the Members, in consequence, left the hall. In England opinion was divided. The Non-conformists, for example, were very determined in demanding Mr. Parnell's resignation, and one or two of the Liberal members expressed themselves bluntly on the subject. "The Liberal party represents the working people, and the so-called middle classes, among whom the purity of home life is held in high esteem," said, for instance, Mr. Ricard, M.P. "We have neither the time nor the inclination for debauchery, and we want our leaders to be men whom we can take by the hand." In America, two or three of the more prominent newspapers were pronounced in support of Mr. Parnell's leadership, and the Irish delegates, then in the States, renewed the expression of their confidence in him, but the great body of the Press were agreed that he must resign. This was the position in short, when Mr. Gladstone, in a letter to Mr. John Morley, declared that, as a result of his observation and reflection, he had arrived at the conclusion that, under the circumstances, Mr. Parnell's continuance as leader would be disastrous to the cause of Ireland, and would render his own retention of the leadership of the Liberal party almost a nullity. In response to this Mr. Parnell published a manifesto, with the object of showing that the loss of Mr. Gladstone's championship and Mr. Morley's alliance would be no great detriment to the Irish cause. He virtually branded both of these eminent men as traitors to the cause they pretended to support. In an interview held at Hawarden, he said, Mr. Gladstone had told him it was his intention to reduce the number of Irish Members in the Imperial Parliament from 103 to 32, to withhold from the Irish Legislature the power of solving the agrarian difficulty, to retain the control of the Irish constabulary for Imperial authority, while its cost would be compulsorily provided out of Irish revenues, and to deal in a similar manner for some 10 or 12 years with the appointment of Irish judges and Resident Magistrates. Mr. Morley, added Mr. Parnell, had proposed to him, in view of a victory of the Liberals, to assume the office of Chief Secretary for Ireland, and to fill one of the law offices of the Crown by a legal member of his party—thus compromising the independence of the Nationalists. He had also declared that he saw no chance of doing anything for the Plan of Campaign tenants. "I allude to the matter," said Mr. Parnell, "only because within the last few days a strong argument in many minds for my expulsion has been that unless the Liberals come into power at the next general election the Plan of Campaign tenants will suffer."—To this manifesto Mr. Gladstone returned a flat denial. "I deny," he said, "that I made the statements which his (Mr. Parnell's) memory ascribes to me, or anything substantially resembling them." The consequence was a change of attitude on the part of all those, with no exception worth speaking of, who had so far been of the opinion that, notwithstanding the admitted heinousness of his offence against morals, Mr. Parnell should retain his position of leader. The Parlia-

mentary party, including five of the delegates to America—that is, Messrs. John Dillon, William O'Brien, Thomas P. O'Connor, T. D. Sullivan, and Thomas P. Gill, the Irish National Press, and the country generally, declared that Mr. Gladstone's pronouncement must be accepted as decisive, and that no separation from the Liberals of Great Britain must take place.—This is, briefly, the situation as explained to us in the newspapers come to hand both from Ireland and America by the last mail—but in another place our readers will find extracts, in which we lay before them an expression of opinion on the matter made by authoritative speakers, or by representative organs of the Press.

Now that the facts of the case are before us, that we have received reliable news, and that there is no longer any room for doubt, our readers may, perhaps, desire that we ourselves should place on record our thoughts and feelings respecting this most lamentable, this truly heart-sickening, affair. We have, however, in a manner, already said what we thought. In saying what, as it appeared to us, must happen should the cable prove to have told the truth, we made our mind sufficiently known, and we have nothing to retract. If the effect in Ireland was to a considerable extent different from what we assumed it must be, perhaps we did not make sufficient allowance for the state of mind begotten by a long struggle and the devotion engendered towards the leader to whom so much was due and on whom still so much seemed to depend. We were mistaken, it seems, and we need not greatly care to explain our mistake. But let us recognise the additional debt that Ireland owes to the illustrious man who recalled her to a sense of her duty, and showed her the precipice on whose brink she stood. We have, meantime, been reminded of many memories stained by defilement of a like kind, Marlborough, Fox, Nelson, Wellington, Lord Melbourne, Lord Palmerston, and we are told that such defilement is common among those men of the world who still attain to eminence. Is Gladstone sustained? Was Wilberforce? Was O'Connell? With ordinary affairs of gallantry, as they are called, we have nothing to do. We must take the world as we find it, and we willingly obey the precept of the Gospel that he who is without sin among us, and be only, should cast the first stone. But is the man who occupies an exceptional place, the man whose name should form a household word, the man to be pointed out as their champion and hero to young girls and boys, to be excused when he comes before the world as a seducer in his worst form? In what respect was the place occupied by Marlborough or Fox or Nelson or Wellington, or those others, equal to that occupied by the leader of the Irish people in their struggle for national life, for freedom of religion, and all that most concerns the moral as well as the material interests of the country? Those men live in history and we admire their great qualities, but they are apart from us and their memory exercises no intimate influence over us. Nelson threw himself at the feet of Lady Hamilton, and was an object of shame and contempt to those even who personally witnessed and rejoiced in his great deeds as a naval captain. Wellington was unfaithful to the woman who, in spite of his frank avowal of an altered mind, kept him to his promise of marriage. But he beat Buonaparte and who now thinks of anything else about him? The character of his renown keeps it separate from the details of his private life. He was in one respect alone, and that the doubtful one of military glory, the hero of his people. But here is a man—whose example now, and whose memory hereafter, must pervade the very lives of the Irish people, who possessed their implicit confidence, who had, it is true, rendered them eminent services, but who was rewarded by their complete devotion—even to the death if he had demanded it of them. It is vain to compare the position occupied by Mr. Parnell with that occupied by men even of extraordinary eminence, but less intimately associated with the lives and higher interests of others. "On my return from London," wrote Captain O'Shea's young son to his father, "I heard the voice of that awful scoundrel Parnell. . . . Perhaps I ought to have gone in and kicked him, but I am anxious to avoid unpleasant scenes with my mother, and I also think it is better for you to know about it before giving him a thrashing, as you, of course, understand more about these things than I do." Any