

A CONDEMNATION OF DUBLIN CASTLE METHODS.

Lord Dunraven's reform scheme, for the purpose of entrusting the people of Ireland with a greater share of local government and giving them control over the expenditure of money devoted to Irish matters, has found a powerful supporter in Sir West Ridgeway, ex-Governor of Ceylon, and formerly Under-Secretary for Ireland. He expressed his views in a letter in the London 'Times,' which, by the way, has been engaged over since the Reform Association came into existence in decrying Lord Dunraven's proposals. Sir West Ridgeway quite candidly explains that he is not a new convert to the beliefs that the present system of Irish Government is wrong. Six years' work as Under-Secretary during the stormy days of the Balfour regime convinced him of this, and it may be remarked that when subsequently taking up the Governorship of the Isle of Man, in 1893, he expressed advanced views in regard to the benefits resulting from Home Rule that were experienced in that island. Like Sir Robert Hamilton, who preceded him at Dublin Castle, he was early impressed with the iniquities of that plague spot. His views, says Sir West, 'were conceived during the period of my service as Under-Secretary for Ireland, and were embodied in a memorandum written in 1889. In that memorandum I advocated the concession of a liberal measure of local government in provincial as well as county councils, the administration of the education grant and other funds raised for that purpose by a local body—at least partially elective—with safeguards for minorities in the various localities, the decentralisation of finance, and consequently the loosening of the rigid Treasury control, the reorganisation of Dublin Castle, and especially the

Abolition of that Chaotic Anachronism—administration by semi-independent boards, whereby three men do the work of one—and the creation of a council to advise the Chief Secretary, such as that of the Secretary of State for India, and comprising the representatives of all parties.' But he was less courageous in his settled convictions than Sir Robert Hamilton, and his reticence he thus explains—'So long as I was in the public service, faithful to the traditions of the Civil Service, I held my peace, but now that I am free to speak I ask for the hospitality of your columns, not because I claim any special value or originality for my opinions, but because I think that it may interest those who are again studying and discussing the eternal Irish question, in the light thrown upon it by the manifesto of the Reform Association, to learn the conclusions which were independently formed by a man who was Under-Secretary during six stormy years—who went

to Ireland an uncompromising supporter of law and order, but otherwise with an open mind, free from preconceived opinions and anxious to consider Irish questions in a judicial spirit.' Sir West Ridgeway, in his letter to the Reform Association, which also appears in the 'Times,' says that since his retirement from the Irish Under-Secretaryship he has never ceased to be a vigilant but necessarily silent observer of Irish politics, and when a Unionist Government came into power with an overwhelming majority at its back, believing as he did in the generous and far-sighted views of its leaders, he expected much, but confessed to some disappointment at the results which have been achieved.

Several Real Grievances,

he points out, remain unredressed, and other important questions have not been touched, or, if touched, quickly dropped. Foremost among these is the University question. 'We all know,' he says, 'Mr. Balfour's statesmanlike views on this important subject, but the extremists of the Unionists forbid him to do justice to the Roman Catholics of Ireland. Nor can we reasonably hope that the Opposition when in power will dare to grasp this nettle, and consequently we moderate men are forced to the conclusion that if this question, on which the peace and contentment of Ireland so largely depend, is ever to be settled, it must be settled in Ireland by the Irish themselves.' The policy pursued by the Moore-Craig combination of revolvers in refusing to allow justice to be done to the Catholics of Ireland in the matter of University education is one of the factors in their irreconcilable policy which Sir West Ridgeway thinks spells disaster to the Union.

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A noticeable feature of the meeting at the Town Hall to discuss the question of preferential trade (says the Melbourne 'Aigis') was the evident feeling of hostility on the part of a section of the audience provoked by the mention of Mr. Chamberlain's name. Particularly was this to be observed when any reference was made to South African affairs, especially with regard to the introduction of Chinese labor on the Rand. A large proportion of the audience seemed unable for a time to dismiss the matter from their minds, and whenever possible they harked back to it by means of interjections. When Mr. Isaacs, M.H.R., characterised as a crime the employment of Chinese on the South African mines, the remark was received with applause.

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