

## Current Topics

### The King in Ireland

It has been officially announced that the King and Queen will visit Ireland in July, soon after the coronation; and it may be taken for certain that there will be no lack of enthusiasm in the welcome which will be accorded to their Majesties on the occasion. 'The Liberal papers,' says *America*, 'interpret it as a sign that the King will subsequently grant Home Rule and thus make true his father's forecast that "a bright day is dawning for Ireland." The Unionist organs take the opposite view, holding that his presence in Ireland means the postponement of such a vexed question. He will travel from Dublin to the West and South, but so far Belfast is not mentioned in his itinerary.'

### Some Figures Worth Studying

We have been dipping into the returns of the votes recorded for the different candidates at the General Election of 1908; and in view of the coming contest this year some of the figures are distinctly interesting. We have jotted down the cases in which the successful candidate was returned by a majority of less than one hundred votes, and for the benefit of Catholics generally—and of those in the districts named in particular—we pass on the information. The figures given are taken from the *Official Year Book*, and are in all cases the final result. We give them in tabular form:—

|                  |     |     |     |       |
|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Dunedin North,—  |     |     |     |       |
| Thomson, G. M.   | ... | ... | ... | 3,382 |
| Barclay, A. R.   | ... | ... | ... | 3,376 |
| Majority         | ... | ... | ... | 6     |
| Nelson,—         |     |     |     |       |
| Graham, J.       | ... | ... | ... | 2,896 |
| Atmore, H.       | ... | ... | ... | 2,882 |
| Majority         | ... | ... | ... | 14    |
| Oroua,—          |     |     |     |       |
| Guthrie, D. H.   | ... | ... | ... | 2,417 |
| Pleasants, O. C. | ... | ... | ... | 1,476 |
| Hornblow, R. E.  | ... | ... | ... | 926   |
| Majority         | ... | ... | ... | 15    |
| Waipawa,—        |     |     |     |       |
| Hall, C.         | ... | ... | ... | 2,507 |
| Hunter, G.       | ... | ... | ... | 2,457 |
| Majority         | ... | ... | ... | 50    |
| Kaiapoi,—        |     |     |     |       |
| Buddo, D.        | ... | ... | ... | 2,746 |
| Moore, R.        | ... | ... | ... | 2,669 |
| Majority         | ... | ... | ... | 77    |
| Palmerston,—     |     |     |     |       |
| Buick, D.        | ... | ... | ... | 2,803 |
| Wood, W. T.      | ... | ... | ... | 2,722 |
| Majority         | ... | ... | ... | 81    |
| Geraldine,—      |     |     |     |       |
| Buxton, T.       | ... | ... | ... | 2,341 |
| Jeffries, W.     | ... | ... | ... | 2,249 |
| Majority         | ... | ... | ... | 92    |
| Otaki,—          |     |     |     |       |
| Field, W. H.     | ... | ... | ... | 2,024 |
| Brown, B. P.     | ... | ... | ... | 1,931 |
| Majority         | ... | ... | ... | 93    |

From the above it will be seen that there are eight electorates in the Dominion in which the successful candidate was returned by a majority of less than 100; and that of these, three were returned by majorities as low, respectively, as 6, 14, and 15. It seems absurd to suppose that Catholics could not in these cases—if they were solid, united and determined—obtain from the sitting member a promise to do justice to the Catholic body, or in the event of refusal, prevent re-election. The figures are very well worth practical attention.

### 'Rome and Politics': O'Connell's Dictum

We have been asked in several quarters whether the oft-quoted dictum ascribed to O'Connell to the effect that he 'would as soon take his politics from Constantinople as from Rome,' is truly attributed to the Liberator or not. The popular notion that he really did utter these words is correct; the almost equally popular notion that the words were spoken with reference to Home Rule is wrong. The full text of the utterance, and an account of the circumstances under which it was made, are given in MacDonagh's *Life of Daniel O'Connell*; and we will allow that author to speak for himself. 'In 1799,' says MacDonagh 'during the negotiations between the Irish Executive and the Catholic bishops on the subject of the Union, the trustees of Maynooth College, the famous training college of the Irish priesthood, consisting of ten bishops (including the four Archbishops), sent to Castlereagh a resolution declaring, on behalf of the Hierarchy, "that in the appointment of prelates of the Roman Catholic religion to vacant Sees within the Kingdom, such interference of the Government as may enable it to be satisfied of the loyalty of the person appointed is just, and ought to be agreed to." The fact that (some of) the Irish bishops were in favor of the Veto was first disclosed in the House of Commons during the debate on the petition of the Catholics for the restoration of their political rights in May, 1808. On the news reaching Ireland, there was a remarkable outburst of popular anger and repudiation. The laity, generally, led by O'Connell, revolted at the idea of their chief pastors being the nominees of a British and Protestant Government. They believed that under such a system the prelates of their Church would be chosen, not for their spiritual worth, but for their subserviency to the Executive. The bishops held a national synod in Dublin in September, and firmly and uncompromisingly repudiated any right of interference by the Crown in the discipline and government of the Catholic Church. Twenty-six prelates were present. Three only (three of the bishops who had signed the declaration in favor of the Veto in 1799) dissented. An address of thanks to the Hierarchy for their resolution was signed by forty thousand laymen. Most of the Catholic gentry, however, were in favor of the Veto. . . . On one side were the aristocracy, led by the Earl of Fingall; and on the other the democracy, under the leadership of O'Connell.'

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The Catholic Board of England, which consisted of a few peers and country gentlemen, appealed to Rome for a pronouncement that there was nothing schismatic or hurtful to the discipline of the Church in the legitimate precautions which the British Government thought needful for the safety of the Kingdom by ensuring the loyalty of the Irish bishops. The Roman States had been annexed by France in 1809. Pope Pius VII. was a prisoner in the hands of Napoleon at Fontainebleau, and all the Cardinals had been expelled from Rome. But Monsignor Quarantotti, the secretary and vice-prefect of the Sacred College for the Propagation of the Faith, who was vested with all the spiritual and ecclesiastical powers of the Pope (except the power of appointing to vacant Sees), sent a rescript, dated February 16, 1814, to Dr. William Poynter, Vicar-Apostolic of the London district, stating that the Veto had been carefully considered by the most learned prelates and divines in Rome, and that in their judgment it ought to be accepted by the Irish Catholics. . . . The early discovery that the document was dated February 16—at which time the Pope was still in captivity—and that it did not bear the signature of his Holiness, had a soothing effect on the distracted popular mind (in Ireland). It was argued that the rescript did not carry Pontifical authority, as it probably had been issued without the sanction or even the knowledge of his Holiness. . . . O'Connell was in the forefront of the renewed agitation against the Veto, and from him came the sturdiest and most uncompromising denunciations of the rescript. He concerned himself not with the canonical and ecclesiastical but with the political side of the Securities. At a meeting of the Catholic Board, held in Capel street, O'Connell protested against the attempt made 'to instruct Irish Catholics upon the manner of their emancipation'; and it was on this occasion that he uttered his vehement and now famous dictum. 'I would,' said he, 'as soon receive my politics from Constantinople as from Rome. For the Head of my Church I have the highest respect; but in the present case I put theology—of which I know nothing, and desire to know nothing—out of my consideration wholly. It was on the ground of its danger to civil liberty that I objected to the late Bill. It would have the effect, if passed into law, of placing in the hands of the Ministers a new and extensive source of patronage, and for that reason I would rather the Catholics should remain for ever without Emancipation than that they should receive it upon such terms.'

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'In the end, the action of Monsignor Quarantotti was, to an extent, disowned by the Pope. The rescript was