

Ireland, as well as South Africa, has become a source of serious trouble to the British ministry. The home rule agitation, which now means not merely Irish autonomy, but separation and an independent government, is reported to have become more menacing than ever before. In the early days of the present session of Parliament, when the debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne was under way, John Redmond, the Irish Nationalist leader in Parliament, vigorously attacked the British policy in Ireland. He complained that instead of remedying admitted wrongs the ministry had fallen back on the old methods of coercion, having abolished trial by jury and unjustifiably imprisoned even members of Parliament; and he warned the chief secretary for Ireland, Mr. Wyndham, that he would yet repent his rash refusal to approve the reasonable demands of Ireland in regard to the compulsory sale and purchase of land. Mr. Redmond closed with the declaration that the Irish would never be well affected toward England until they were masters of their own country. Mr. Wyndham replied with an explanation that the ministry had no hope of settling the Irish question and only hoped to do a little toward improving it. As to the land purchase policy, he objected to compulsory sales because they excite litigation; and he assured Parliament that the existing Irish agitation amounted to little. That was on the 23d of January last. The next day T. P. O'Conner, also an Irish Nationalist, supported Redmond in the debate, in a speech in which he asserted that landlordism in Ireland is doomed, and that the present debate marked the beginning of a new epoch in Irish history. The Irish amendment to the address, which formulated the policy of the Irish members, and in support of which this debate occurred, as defeated on the 25th of January by an ordinary ministerial majority. Consequently the Irish land bill, introduced in Parliament by Mr. Wyndham on the 25th, provides only for voluntary sales. There is no compulsory clause. The land commission is authorized to buy the whole or any part of an estate whose owner is willing to sell and to resell it to the tenants, provided three-quarters of the tenants in number assent. In case the landlord desires to live on the estate he may repurchase one-fifth. While the Irish members have not yet opposed this bill, they have notified the minority

that compulsory purchase is the only ultimate solution of the problem.

What gives a menacing aspect to this question, supplemented as it is by demands for independence, is the extensive organization of the United Irish league, of which William Redmond says:

Ireland to-day is united—north, south, east and west—on the platform of the United Irish league, as she was in the days of Parnell in the Land league. . . . The objects of the league are the objects of the Land league—to give the ownership of the farms to the tillers of the soil. We are trying to do away with the renting of the ground. But our great object is not only to free the land, but to free Ireland, to bring about the time when the crimson shadow of the flag of Great Britain will no longer darken the green fields of our land.

Mr. Wyndham has reported that the league is composed of only a few disturbers; but reports of events in Ireland do not confirm that view. On the 30th of January Roscommon county was in a state of open rebellion against paying rent. A month later 40 Roscommon tenants of Lord De Freyne—a landlord who refuses to sell at any price—were evicted by an army of police, and proceedings were pending against many hundreds more, while 15 representative public men had been imprisoned for taking part in political meetings. In other places the league was pushing its agitation so vigorously, though without violent outbreaks, that an independent candidate for a vacancy in the House of Commons for one of the strongholds of the Orangemen of Ulster, a man of radical views on the land question, defeated a Conservative. The Conservatives are usually in such large majority in the district that the seat is seldom contested. That the power of the league is greater than Mr. Wyndham thought appears, also, from the London Times, which, on the 22d, expressed impatience with the ministers for timidity in dealing with the league, and gave warning that it will be perilous for them any longer to shut their eyes to the serious condition in Ireland. The timidity mentioned was an allusion to the action of the ministry a few days ago with reference to the league. It had been proposed in cabinet session to proclaim the league as illegal and to suppress it by force; but on the 11th the cabinet decided that the time had not yet arrived for such a drastic pro-

ceeding. The opinion seems to have prevailed in the cabinet that coercion should be avoided as far as possible until it is seen whether the land purchase bill described above has a tranquilizing effect.

Disturbed feelings among the leading European governments over a variety of complications are apparent. A prospective rising in Macedonia against Turkey; a rebellion in southern China; a belligerent disposition on the part of Japan, now that Great Britain has become her ally for the protection of China; a diplomatic note from Russia nominally approving that alliance but pointedly intimating that she is in alliance with France, also for the protection of China—these rumblings, by all of which Great Britain is affected, as well as by South Africa and Ireland, and which are listened to at Washington with no little concern, are possibly prophetic of an early outbreak of a war of the first magnitude. But as yet they produce only vague unrest.

In the United States the one important event of the week is the action of the Interstate Commerce Commission against collusive railways, for the purpose of putting an end to the prevailing system of rebates on freight charges. When the Commission issued advance sheets of its fifteenth annual report (pp. 677, 781), it thus advised the public that the railroads, both east and west of Chicago, allow to the large packing houses freight rates below published tariff charges, thereby giving to these houses an enormous advantage over their small competitors. Those disclosures have now been followed up by legal proceedings under the direction of W. A. Day, the counsel for the Commission, whom the attorney general has appointed a special United States attorney for the purpose. On the 18th, indictments were found by the Federal grand jury at Louisville, Ky., against the Louisville & Nashville and the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis railways, for making rebates to favored shippers. This action was followed up with injunction suits in the Federal courts in Kansas City and Chicago. The Chicago suits are against the Michigan Central, the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern, the Pennsylvania the Illinois Central, the Chicago & Northwestern, and the Pittsburg, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis roads. On the 23d Judge Grosscup set the hearings