

United States appear to have entered into diplomatic conferences with Great Britain and Germany relative to the South American republic of Venezuela. Although nothing more definite about the termination of the civil war in Venezuela has been reported than what we produced last month (p. 503), the dispatches indicate that the opposition to President Castro has been subdued, although some unimportant conflicts with small bands of insurgents are still reported. But a new danger has loomed up which may even revive the insurrection. The country is threatened with invasion by Great Britain and Germany. The latter has long menaced Venezuela. Upon the basis of a Venezuelan railroad loan held by German subjects (vol. iv, p. 601-2), it has threatened to collect the debt by forcibly taking possession of Venezuelan custom houses. Great Britain has since been drawn into an agreement with Germany for the ostensible purpose of collecting similar British claims and protecting European interests in Venezuela. This agreement was divulged in London on the 22d of November. It was at the same time reported, also from London, that the British government had received assurances that the United States would not interfere so long as the Monroe doctrine, which denies the right of European powers to acquire territory on this side of the Atlantic, was not defied. Both powers are represented by war ships in the Caribbean sea, and Admiral Dewey has gone to the Caribbean to take command of the large American fleet now in those waters nominally for practice maneuvers. It has been indicated by Great Britain and Germany to present to Venezuela a joint ultimatum, but on the 1st Berlin reports were to the effect that President Castro had signed an agreement acknowledging part of the German claims and that the proposed ultimatum had consequently been postponed. Then there were rumors from Washington that negotiations through the Seligman banking house were on foot for an issue of Venezuelan bonds, to be guaranteed by the United States, out of the proceeds of which the German and British claims might be satisfied. Since these rumors, however, it is reported from Washington that the two European powers are to make a joint naval demonstration at once. It is intimated that both have given assurances to the American government that

their purpose is to serve an ultimatum on President Castro demanding the payment of the obligations due the complaining commercial companies, and, if that fails, to establish a peaceful blockade of the principal Venezuelan ports, probably Puerto Cabello and La Guayra, and, if that fails, to seize custom houses and collect duties to the extent of the debt. To this purpose the government at Washington is understood to make no objection.

Great Britain's Irish difficulties (pp. 455-6, 487, 502) are apparently in process of satisfactory, even if only temporary, settlement. To that end, many of the landlords themselves are in conference with the tenants, though a large landlord faction opposes the movement. A convention of Irish land owners was held at Dublin on the 28th. At the same time and in the same city a committee of other Irish land owners, led by Lord Dunraven, assembled and addressed a communication to the convention proposing a conference with the tenants relative to a possible sale of the lands to them. Dunraven's committee based this proposal upon the fact (see p. 522) that it had sent voting papers on the subject to 4,000 owners of more than 500 acres each, and that the vote returned stood 1,128 in favor of a conference with tenants and 578 opposed, the others not voting. To this communication the landlords replied that the tenants must first perfect a business organization and formulate the terms they desire. Lord Dunraven's response was the adoption by his committee of a resolution instructing the landlords that support his policy to take immediate steps for a conference with their tenants. It is believed that in this policy of conciliation he has the support of the king and the ministry.

The British House of Commons passed the much debated education bill (p. 502) on the 3d by a vote of 236 to 132. It was immediately sent to the House of Lords, where, on the same day, it received its first reading.

In Germany what promises fairly to bring about a dangerous crisis in parliamentary government has nearly come to a head. This serious situation has been precipitated by the determination of the protectionists to force through the ministerial tariff bill, a bill which is opposed stub-

bornly by both the Socialist party and the People's party. Under the rules of the reichstag the measure must be considered by paragraphs; but this process was too slow to satisfy its supporters, and a combination of the Conservative, the National Liberal and the Center parties was made for the purpose of ordering that the measure be passed upon, not by paragraphs, but as a whole. A motion to this effect was made, whereupon the reichstag was in an uproar in a minute. The People's party and the Socialist party, united against the conservative coalition, denounced the motion as out of order and autocratic. No vote upon it has yet been reached. The nature of the feeling aroused may be inferred from the following cabled extract from the speech of the Socialist leader, Bebel, in denunciation of the protection combination:

By devices such as these the tariff will be presented to the ruling classes at Christmas so that they, over their caviar and oysters, may sneer at the efforts of the Social Democrats to protect the pockets of the poor.

France is in the throes of another labor strike, that of the stokers and sailors, which has assumed serious proportions at Marseilles and become a subject of parliamentary consideration. For want of sea transportation passengers to the number of a thousand or more are delayed at that port, and 8,000 troops are patrolling the streets. In answer to an interpellation in parliament on the 1st, the minister of commerce explained that the policy of the ministry in the matter of strikes was to maintain an attitude of neutrality toward both parties, to protect the workmen in the free exercise of their right to strike, and also to enforce regularity in the public service. The postal service was already provided for, he said, and there was not a single mail bag now delayed; but it was not possible to re-establish the passenger and freight traffic in the normal way. There were several other modes of doing so, he continued, one being to furnish sailors of the navy to the steamship companies; but the ministry did not desire to do this, as it would be taking sides with the companies. Another method was to transport the passengers and freight on government ships, but if the ministry did this, it would collect the tolls for the benefit of the state. The third way was to requisition the vessels of the companies and