

POLITICS IN ENGLAND.

The Times Hints That the Premier May Hand Over the Reins of Power to Opponents Instead of Dissolving.

BALFOUR MAY RESIGN; DECISION STILL IN DOUBT; CAUSE OF CRISIS

London, Nov. 27.—Considerable doubt exists as to the exact determination reached by the Cabinet at its council Saturday. Despite the assertion after the meeting that the Cabinet decided upon dissolution rather than resignation, the Times, which is generally inspired, says this morning:

"We have reason to believe that while the political situation was naturally under discussion at yesterday's Cabinet Council, no decision was arrived at. Indeed, constitutionally the question of resignation rests with the Prime Minister and not with the Cabinet. No announcement of any kind is expected for a few days, but in well-informed political circles it is thought that after careful consideration of the existing conditions Premier Balfour will be confirmed in his view that he can no longer hold office with advantage to the country or credit to himself, and will place his resignation in the hands of the King."

LORD LONDONDERRY NOT OUT.

As the Marquis of Londonderry was present at the Cabinet Council it became evident that Mr. Balfour did not accept his tendered resignation. All doubt on the subject was dispelled later by a statement from the Minister himself to the effect that he had not resigned.

(In this connection it is interesting to recall some recent events: Speaking at Sunderland on November 1, Lord Londonderry said: "I am convinced that many of those who looked to the standard of Mr. Chamberlain when he launched his proposals like a thunderbolt have since realized that his action was premature, and that safety can alone be found in loyally adhering to the lead of Mr. Balfour." This remark elicited the following response from Mr. Chamberlain at Birmingham on November 2nd: "Lord Londonderry is not one of the oldest—I would even say he is not one of the most important—members of the Cabinet. He owes his position entirely to the Prime Minister. He has continually boasted of his loyalty to Mr. Balfour, and yet we find him supporting the Free Traders, who are the bitterest enemies of the Premier's policy, and apparently desiring that the policy itself should be put into the back-ground. I understand loyalty in a different sense." The sequel to this came on November 11 when Premier Balfour speaking at Seaham Harbor in the presence of Lord Londonderry said: "Lord Londonderry has been good enough to allude to the old friendship which has existed between him and myself now for many years, a friendship which has been a matter of fact apart from politics, but which was augmented by the close political and official connection which began when he was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and I was his Chief Secretary . . . Time, I am convinced, will never efface the memories of the past, but will rather strengthen from day to day the sentiments between us which were then engendered."

THE PREMIER'S PECULIAR POSITION.

In his speech to the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations at Newcastle on November 14, Mr. Balfour spoke very plainly as to the perilous position of the party. He reminded his hearers that he had led the House of Commons for a longer continuous period than any predecessor since William Pitt, and proceeded: "Are we equipped for fighting this great contest, which may be imminent, and which, whether imminent or not, cannot be long deferred? I cannot honestly answer that question with a full and satisfactory affirmation. I did not think, as things now are, the Unionist party has arrayed itself for this great conflict, and formed itself in the order of battle in the manner which best promises for success in the field."

He could not, he continued, more clearly put before them what he regarded as the great dangers of the situation than if he touched upon an episode in the House of Commons last year. When the fiscal question came on he publicly advised the party to take no part in the debate or division on it. That advice he gave entirely on his own responsibility. It was most reluctantly acquiesced in by some of his colleagues, in whose judgment he had the greatest confidence. It had been subjected to most adverse criticism by some of the most eminent members of the party in the House of Commons, but he had not the slightest doubt that the advice he then gave was the right advice, and that any other would have been dogged by disaster. The Opposition, no doubt, believed that the Government were afraid and ran away. That was the legend they had assiduously promulgated, but they made a great mistake. It must be remembered that the fiscal debates in the House of Commons had been neither few nor far between, for no fewer than eleven hundred pages of Hansard had been devoted to speeches of members of the House of Commons on the fiscal question. The course pursued by the Government had no connection with the Opposition at all.

AFRAID OF HIS FRIENDS.

"No," proceeded Mr. Balfour, "I was not afraid of the Opposition; I was afraid of my friends, because I have had it borne in upon me by the painful experience of two and a half years that upon this fiscal question

the Unionist party is more interested in criticizing its own members than in turning a united front to the Opposition. I am here to say exactly what I think, and I mean to say it. Nobody who has had the experience that I have had in this matter will say that I exaggerate when I tell you that a party united on all other questions were apt to be divided into sections by dexterously drawn resolutions of the Opposition, and that is why I determined that after these eleven hundred columns of Hansard had been spouted forth the House of Commons was not to be made the arena in which the different sections of the same party should make a battlefield, because I knew that if that was to go on we would have been rendered impotent for the work we had in hand." The Japanese Treaty was in process of arrangement, and it seemed to him folly to imperil great constructive acts in order to debate subjects which did not touch the pressing needs of the nation. The members of a political party had the right of individual opinion, and they could not expect more than a common agreement with regard to the policy immediately before it.

A COMMON FISCAL POLICY FOR THE PARTY.

They need not always be reminded of the possible controversies which in the future they might have with their political friends. His faith in the party system compelled him to proceed with all his strength and force against stretching the doctrine of party unanimity to a point at which it must break. If they agreed with him the only question they had to ask was this: Was there on the fiscal question a practical policy upon which a Unionist Government could be formed? Was there such a policy before the party? If there was, all other aspects of the question should be swept aside as not only irrelevant but absolutely pernicious to the party system. "I say," continued Mr. Balfour, amid loud cheers, "there is such a policy before you." Agreement was easy of attainment if only the party would consent to take that which lay before them. He did not say that the whole Tory party was agreed on every economic subject, but they might expect, and would get, a policy of fiscal reform in which all Unionists might, for all practical purposes, agree. It was on that common policy which he implored the party to concentrate their attention. They ought to be concerned with the differences which might exist outside that policy. With regard to what had been called reticulation, there ought not to be any disagreement in the party. He had advocated the calling together of a conference with the colonies which should be free. Surely there ought to be no difference of opinion in regard to that matter.

"NOT ON THE PROTECTION SIDE."

He acknowledged that the party had always been disunited on the subject of protection, and, said Mr. Balfour, "I have never been, and am not, on the protection side." (Cheers.) He, however, believed that the doctrine of "laissez faire" was antiquated and illusory. It was, perhaps, a convenient doctrine for the legislature, but he was more than ever convinced that in the commercial department of politics it was antiquated and old-fashioned, and belonged to a mode of thought that

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had passed away, and that the Government of this country in the future must have their hands free to do all they could to the industries of the country—(cheers)—and by helping the industries help not merely the manufacturer, not merely the wage-earner, but the citizen, regarded neither as capitalist nor wage-earner, but the citizen regarded as consumer. He knew that the views which he had given to the assembly were not precisely the views that would be acceptable to everybody. (A Voice: "No, no, no.") He (Mr. Balfour) hoped nine-tenths; but he was not asking for nine-tenths tonight; he was asking for ten-tenths. The other one-tenth would be sufficient to neutralize, for all practical purposes, the most enthusiastic and most united efforts of the remaining nine-tenths. He said ten-tenths or nothing. (Cheers.) How many constituents of the country were there in which the local leaders and their followers insisted upon discussing, not the constructive policy which he recommended, but possible differences that might arise among them if and when the policy was carried out?

A PITIFUL APPEAL.

"Let that state of things end," said Mr. Balfour, "I speak here, as the leader, for the time being, of this great party, with which for thirty years I have been associated, and to which I have given the best I have to give, both in time and labor. (Loud cheers.) There is no use in a leader unless you mean to follow him and the advice which I today give you, and which I should like spread in every constituency, is to forget the differences which are outside the practical politics of the hour, and to associate yourselves in a common support of the policy which in my opinion all can accept. I am confident that if you reject my advice disaster will overtake our cause, as it overtakes every cause whose supporters are not at one with each other."

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During the repairs going on at the Hellso opera house for the last fortnight over seven hundred tulleis have been picked out of the master and woodwork. Civilization is coming this way, but it will be some time yet before the boys surrender the privilege of shooting their applause all over the house.

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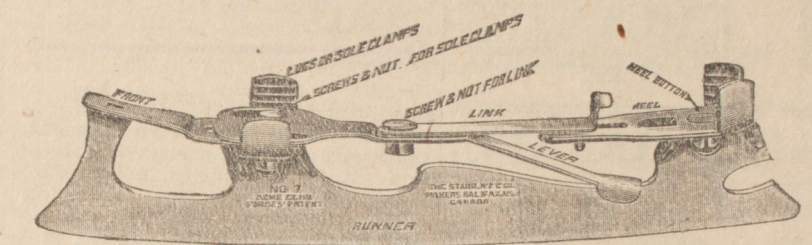
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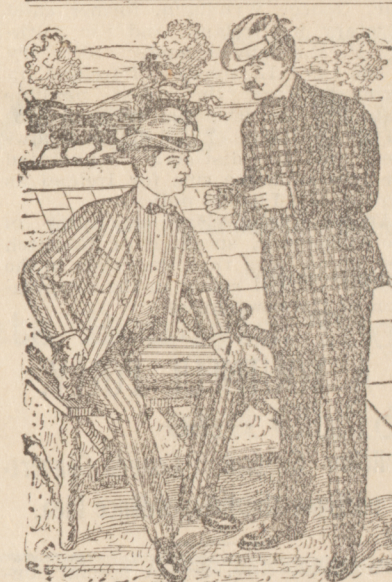
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