

This, it is stated, is regarded as finally closing the international phase of the incident. A Lloyd's telegram states that on Saturday the Colonial Office received news from the Governor of Jamaica of the sinking of Mouton Point.

The annual meeting of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce was held yesterday in the Commercial Buildings, Dame street, Mr. Marcus Goodbody, J.P., presiding. Arising out of the consideration of the report, a discussion took place, in the course of which some members advocated protection as being necessary in the interests of the trade of the country.

The annual meeting of the Royal Zoological Society of Ireland was held in Dublin yesterday. The report of the Council showed that the number of visitors during the year was nearly 7,000 more than the previous year, and that several important improvements were effected at the Gardens during the past twelve months. In proposing the report's adoption, Judge Boyd regretted the paucity of private gifts, especially by Irishmen abroad.

A brass tablet to the memory of Sir Samuel and Lady Ferguson was unveiled yesterday in St. Patrick's Cathedral by Professor Dowden, who delivered an appropriate oration. Lord Justice Fitz-Gibbon, on behalf of the subscribers, handed over the custody of the tablet to the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral, and the Dean, on behalf of himself and his colleagues, accepted the trust.

Yesterday the annual meeting of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland was held in the society's rooms, Stephen's green, and the report, which was read, was regarded as most satisfactory. Several new Fellows and members were elected, and Athlone was selected for the summer excursion of the society.

Mr. James Barbour, senior partner in the engineering firm of Fairbairn, Lawson, Combe, Barbour, Limited, Belfast and Leeds, died yesterday.

The three privates in the Inniskilling Dragoons who were found guilty of binding and gagging a sentry, and breaking out of barracks and taking War Office horses with them at Ballinacollig, were yesterday, at Cork, sentenced as follows: Thompson and Laurington each 112 days' imprisonment, Thompson at the expiration of the sentence to be dismissed with disgrace and ignominy; the recruit Duffy fifty-one days' imprisonment.

In London yesterday, the general carry-over absorbed attention in the Stock markets. Rates were lighter than on last occasion, and the tone was slightly better. American Rails, however, closed with a further decline. Money in the open market was in active demand at 43-5 p.c. Discount rates were steady. In Dublin business was small, with marked strength in English Sewing Cotton, and activity in Tyre and Cycle Shares. Humbers rose smartly.

At a moment when the Unionist Party ought to be closing up its attenuated ranks in order to do battle with the Government in what promises to be a very exciting Session it is curious to find it squabbling about its leader and its programme. The extreme Tariff Reformers have never forgiven Mr. Balfour for not adopting their policy. They attribute the crushing defeat at the polls to the popular appeal by the party in the Valentine's Day correspondence, in which Mr. Balfour declared his opinion that "fiscal reform is, and must remain, the first constructive work of the Unionist Party," and that "the objects of such reform are to secure more equal terms of competition for British trade, and closer commercial union with the Colonies." But they were disgusted by Mr. Balfour's subsequent silence upon the matter. Apparently they thought that he ought to have taken up the work which Mr. Chamberlain had been compelled by his illness to abandon, and to have "stumped the country" in favour of fiscal reform. Instead of this the ex-Premier has been almost ostentatiously silent on the subject in his various public utterances, and hence he has revived the hostility to his leadership which was so pronounced twelve months ago. The Tariff Reformers are clamouring for the promulgation of a regular programme, with fiscal reform as its principal item, and they declare, implicitly if not explicitly, that if Mr. Balfour is deaf to their appeals they must find another leader who is more in harmony with their views and aspirations.

It is possible to sympathise to a certain extent with the malcontents, and yet to disagree entirely with their present action. There is no doubt that Mr. Balfour's inability to take up a definite and unmistakable position on the question of tariff reform was one, and perhaps not the least important, of the factors that led to the Unionist downfall. If he had been able to declare himself strongly on one side or the other he would have probably found himself at the head of a much larger body of followers than now attend him in the House of Commons. But we must take our leaders as we find them. Mr. Balfour has on certain questions—and political economy is one of them—what is called "a cross-bench mind." On a subject so complicated, so dependent for its right elucidation upon statistics, which ingenious special pleaders on either side can easily turn to their account, and so immensely important to the national well-being, it is not surprising, though it may be regrettable, that Mr. Balfour has not fully and completely made up his mind. In the Valentine's Day correspondence he probably went to the extreme limit that his conscience would allow in order to avoid a breach with Mr. Chamberlain and his supporters; and even so he put in the proviso that "it is at present unnecessary to prescribe the exact measures by which these objects are to be attained, and inexpedient to permit differences of opinion as to these methods to divide the Party." He is doubtless of the same opinion still, and that is probably one of the reasons—the emergence of other public questions of more immediate and pressing importance being the other—why he has avoided the fiscal question in his recent speeches. With most of what Mr. Walter Long said on the subject in his speech at St. Pancras yesterday we find ourselves in cordial agreement. It is certainly not wise for Unionists to be quarrelling about their present leader at the opening of a Session which promises to furnish him with unequalled opportunities of displaying his gift of destructive criticism on a subject peculiarly his own. As for the talk of a definite programme, it seems unwise to pin the party to a cut-and-dried document at a time when there is no prospect of its being called upon to assume the responsibilities of office. There will be plenty of time to formulate a programme before this Parliament has run its course. The first duty of an Opposition is to oppose, and the Government of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman is furnishing it with plenty of opportunities for the exercise of its proper function.

When the time arrives for the Unionist Party to formulate a programme it is possible that Tariff Reform will not be a principal item. If so, it will not be because Unionists, or the great majority

of them, have ceased to believe in it—for the seed which was sown by Mr. Chamberlain four years ago fell into very receptive soil—but because by that time the logic of events will have forced the Radicals also to recognise that there is "something in it," and have removed it from the arena of acute party controversy. This speculation is suggested by the remarkable speech made by Mr. Lloyd George at Walsall on Monday. The President of the Board of Trade used to be of the strictest sect of Cobdenism. But he has learned a good deal since he went to Whitehall. Some of the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act, which he piloted so successfully through the House of Commons last Session, showed that he was not an altogether hide-bound Free Trader. Several points in his latest speech suggest that his education is progressing rapidly. The notion that the Government should do nothing to assist its traders no longer appeals to him. On the contrary, he thinks that the Government can do a great deal to assist the trade and commerce of the country by improving the intelligence department—to use his own words, "by the Government undertaking on behalf of the trade of this country what, probably, the German trade must be doing for itself by reason of its superior organisation." The first outcome of this new view is that in future British Consuls will have to pass through the Intelligence Department of the Board of Trade. An even more remarkable illustration of the leaven working in Mr. Lloyd George's mind was furnished by his remarks on patents. He pointed out that "when the Government gave a privilege of that kind, it gave it as a reward for inventiveness; but the main object in giving it was to benefit this country." There is a distinct smack of Protection in that sentence, but it is nothing to what follows (we quote the Daily News report)—

It was pointed out to him that thousands of foreigners applied for patents in this country in the course of a year. He did not object to that; but they used it for the purpose of preventing anyone from setting up an industry or utilising that patent in this country. That he considered to be an intolerable abuse of the privilege conferred upon them. (Applause.) He would confer the privilege of foreigners if they would use it on British soil. (Hear, hear.) He would say to them, "If you are coming here, and if you seek protection from the laws of our country, it must be for the benefit of the country that confers that protection." (Hear, hear.) He would give them patents in this country; but he would compel them to work them here. He hoped to introduce a Bill next Session for the purpose of simplifying that process.

After this we are not surprised to learn that in regard to fiscal reform Mr. Lloyd George announces his intention "to get the facts, whether they went against his theory or not, and if the facts smashed his theory of things, the sooner it was smashed the better." Possibly, therefore, by the time that the Unionists find it necessary to formulate a definite programme they will find that Tariff Reform is no longer fitted to be an ensign of battle, but will only serve for a flag of truce.

The National Theatre Company cannot complain that Dublin's reception of Mr. Synge's play, "The Playboy of the Western World," at the Abbey Theatre has been lacking in warmth. The play, Mr. Synge tells us, was "made to amuse." Perhaps a section of our countrymen can only achieve amusement by working themselves into a violent passion. At any rate they have amused themselves during the last two nights by making such a pandemonium at the Abbey Theatre that the actors have been obliged to go through their parts in dumb show. The charges made against the play in defence of this rowdy conduct are that its plot and characters are an outrageous insult to the West of Ireland and its people, and that some of its language is vulgar, and even indelicate. The hero of the play is a disreputable tramp, who only ceases to be courted by the women of a Western village when they discover that he is not really a parricide. Such an incident would be uncommon in any civilised country. The "Irish Ireland" critics of Mr. Synge's play have decided that it would be absolutely impossible in Ireland—just as they decided previously, in the case of the "Countess Cathleen," that it would be impossible for any Irishwoman to sell her soul to the devil, and, in the case of "The Spell," that it would be impossible for any Irishwoman to believe in the potency of a love-philtre. "Calumny gone raving mad" is how the Freeman's Journal describes "The Playboy of the Western World," and during the last two nights considerable bodies of apparently intelligent young men have endorsed that verdict by appearing to go raving mad at the Abbey Theatre.

It need hardly be said that no well-balanced mind can defend for a single moment the Sinn Féin party's crude and violent methods of dramatic criticism. Let us admit at once that Mr. Synge's play has serious faults. It seems to be granted by his most enthusiastic admirers that some of his language has the material fault of being indelicate and the artistic fault of obscuring the essential realities of the play. An error in taste, however, is not a crime, and the shriekings of an infuriated mob are not the proper method of rebuking it. As to the main incident of the play being impossible, Mr. Synge has produced prima facie evidence in favour of its possibility. The idea, he says, was suggested to him by the fact that a few years ago a man who committed a murder was kept hidden by the people on one of the Arran Islands until he could get off to America. Mr. Synge refers us also to the case of Lynchehaun, who was a most brutal murderer of a woman, and yet, by the aid of Irish peasant women, managed to conceal himself from the police for months. The fact is that while, in our opinion, there are aspects of Mr. Synge's play which may be justly and severely criticised, the Sinn Féin shouters have ignored these altogether, and have founded their objections on a theory of Celtic impeccability which is absurd in principle, and intolerable when it is sought to be rigidly imposed as a canon of art. Our own criticism of the play is based solely on artistic considerations. We blame Mr. Synge, for instance, for not having made his motive clear to his audience. Hardly any member of the gathering which witnessed the first production on Saturday night seems to have been able to say what the author was "driving at." Another column that clever writer involves an interesting and plausible theory of what was in Mr. Synge's mind. Even, however, if it were a Hilary, Mr. Synge appears to have ignored his audience a definite fact. But, if Mr. Synge is to be interviewed in an "interview" with the Freeman's Journal, it is an evening of the evening. EXAMINATION FOR JUNIOR SOUVENIR fact, he had no SECOND fact. He is said to have written that he wrote it BANK OFFICE, that he wrote it 33 Upper Abbey street, D.

to please himself, and that its Irish setting was a mere accident. If this be a true explanation we confess that we find it hard to defend "The Playboy of the Western World." The idle aim of a mere extravaganza does not justify the grimly realistic treatment of a distinctly unpleasant theme. A serious purpose, clearly brought home, would have vindicated the play. If, however, Mr. Synge was simply a humourist, then he has played with edged tools, and he can hardly lay claim to that feeling of self-approval which was the consolation of the Roman actress when she, too, was hissed from the stage. Yet even if the faults of Mr. Synge's play were much greater than we take them to be, the treatment which it has received from a section of the public is utterly indefensible. Mr. Synge is an artist, and, as such, not immune from criticism; but it ought to be intelligent criticism. The claim—not now advocated for the first time—that people should be allowed to howl down a play or a book merely because it offends their crude notions of patriotism cannot be tolerated for a moment, if there is ever to be any such thing as independent thought in Ireland. We heartily endorse everything that Mr. W. B. Yeats said yesterday on this subject.

When I was a lad (said Mr. Yeats) Irishmen obeyed a few leaders; but during the last ten years a change has taken place. For leaders we have now societies, clubs, and leagues. Organised opinion of sections and coteries has been put in place of these leaders, one or two of whom were men of genius. There are some exceptions, as heretofore, but the mass only understand conversion by terror, threats, and abuse.

It is high time for thoughtful Irishmen of all parties to make a stand for freedom of thought and speech against bodies which seek to introduce into the world of the mind the methods which the Western branches of the United Irish League have introduced into politics. For this reason we sympathise with the plucky stand which the National Theatre Company is making against the organised tyranny of the clap-trap patriots. We hope, however, that the next battle will be over a play to which, as a work of art, we shall be able to give a more whole-hearted approval than we find it possible to offer to "The Playboy of the Western World."

The Irish Times

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30, 1907.

"IRISH TIMES" SPECIAL WEATHER FORECAST.

The following forecast of the weather in Ireland for the next three days is specially made for the Irish Times. The next forecast will be published on Saturday:—

- First day, W. to N.W. strong or fresh winds, some snow, sleet showers, and cold; second day, N.W. to S.W. winds, moderate, fairer, and cold to normal; third day, S.W. freshening winds, cloudy, some showers, and milder.
- The advent and expansion of cyclonic conditions over Western Europe, and the restriction of anti-cyclone to the Spanish Peninsula, are favouring the continuance of a changeable and stormy type, with winds varying from N.W. to S.W.

The King and Queen, Princess Victoria, the Princess of Wales, and Prince Edward of Wales arrived at Buckingham Palace yesterday morning from Windsor. The Royal party were cordially welcomed.

The King yesterday received in London Lord Charles Beresford, who is the new Admiral of the Channel Fleet.

Mr. Walter Runciman has been appointed Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mr. C. E. Hobhouse Under Secretary of State for India, in the place of the Right Hon. J. E. Ellis, M.P., resigned, and Mr. T. J. MacNamara, Parliamentary Secretary of the Local Government Board.

Mr. Walter Long, speaking last night in North St. Pancras, endorsed what Mr. Austen Chamberlain had said as to Mr. Balfour's leadership, and counselled Unionists to be united. He also suggested a round-table conference for the discussion of domestic differences on Fiscal Reform, and condemned the Devolution proposals for Ireland. Alluding to municipal matters, Mr. Long spoke strongly on what he described as the spendthrift policy of the London Progressive Party, and in this connection characterised the recent speech of Mr. Burns as the declaration of a raving mad. Municipal reformers believed in progress, but in a sane progress.

General Edward Henry Clive is gazetted Colonel of the King's Liverpool Regiment, and Lieut.-General Sir Charles Edmond Knox is gazetted Colonel of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry.

A Berlin telegram of yesterday states that the Emperor has sent Prince Friedrich Leopold of Prussia to the scene of the Reden Colliery disaster, to make a report to His Majesty. The work of rescue is still interrupted by the fire which has broken out in the mine.

A Washington telegram of yesterday states that Sir A. Swettenham has withdrawn the letter he addressed to Rear-Admiral Evans, and expressed his regrets.