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EDITORIAL

## THE OPPORTUNITY OF IRELAND.

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**W**ITH only forty-seven more electorates to be heard from, the conclusion is safe that the Liberals, though returning with a plurality to the House of Commons, are not returned with an absolute majority, and that their plurality is so small that, even if re-inforced by the Laborite contingent, the allies of the Liberals, the two combined will still fall short of a majority. Under these circumstances the seventy-and-odd Irish Nationalists hold the balance of power. The Irish contingent has before now more than once held such a place of vantage. They did so frequently under Parnell. Never before, however, were the circumstances such that the Irish balance of power afforded a great historic opportunity to Ireland.

The present United Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland once were three warring principalities. The feuds among them held down all the three. In the course of time England and Scotland united, but Ireland remained what she is to-day, a bleeding member held to the British Crown, not by mutual love but by violence. The problem of the unification of Ireland with Great Britain has seemed impossible of solution. Irish dignity has rebelled against a union that savored strongly of forcible annexation. The leading issue of the present campaign, the House of Lords, would seem to offer Ireland in hand an opportunity similar to that which fell to the lot of Scotland when she merged with England, and merged with dignity and pride.

England and Scotland, down to the beginning of the 17th Century, were virtually two armed camps against each other. A unity of the two could not have been conceived except as the consequence of the conquest of one by the other. However, when Queen Bess died; when she herself recognized the then King of Scotland her successor; and when he was crowned as James I. in England, the two

countries, so zealous each of her dignity, felt reconciled. The weaker gave a King to the united two nations, the stronger retained the seat of government. Old scores were wiped out, and, from Landsend north to the Orkneys a thenceforth united people looked in the same direction into the future.

In the present elections, all the efforts of the Lords to inject the side issue of a tariff into the campaign failed to obscure the issue that the masses had in mind and at heart. That issue was The Lords—an institution that is a vestige of feudalism, repulsive to that spirit of the bourgeois revolution that spurns the thought of hereditary political rights. The popular campaign songs; the tumult at meetings where Lords sought to justify their existence; the pasquinades issued from the press against the “titled unemployed”; the jokes that the campaign gave birth to and in all of which the “Dukes” were the butt of the satirist;—all this denotes the trend of the popular feeling—the abolition of the House of Lords. The issue of the elections strips the Liberals of the power themselves to carry out that portion of the unwritten program of their own bourgeois revolution, which their own bourgeois revolution left undone in the days of its activity—the lopping off of the hereditary chamber. The Liberals have not the needed majority. The election returns put it out of the power of even Liberals and Laborites combined to render to civilization the boon of clearing the path of progress by removing the nuisance of The Lords. It lies with the Irish Nationalists to furnish the requisite majority for the accomplishment of the deed.

The feather in Ireland’s cap of having swept the British House of Lords out of existence would be of a piece with the feather in Scotland’s cap of having furnished England with a King. As the latter act unified the English and the Scottish hearts, so now the former act would unify Irish, Scottish and English hearts.

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