

BLAKE AND THE IRISH QUESTION.

BY AN OCCASIONAL CONTRIBUTOR.

THE MOST LOYAL SUBJECT of the British Empire is the man who places all minor considerations—personal or political—aside, and declares for the greatest amount of general freedom to all sections of that Empire. For my part I fail to understand why British statesmen—who are so keen, so diplomatic, so progressive on all other subjects and in regard to all other portions of the Empire—should persistently remain blind to the fact, that as long as they deny to Ireland the autonomy which every colony possesses, and which they demand for their fellow-countrymen all over the world, the solidification, the permanent stability, the very future greatness and strength of Great Britain are absolutely unattainable. Yet do we behold, even in the glittering of the twentieth century's herald rays, the extraordinary anomaly of the Imperial power according an almost unlimited freedom, an entire measure of self-government, to Canada, to Australia, to India, to every colonial possession, and at the same time, leaping over the most important section of the whole Empire, and refusing to Ireland—at the very doors I might say of Westminster—the same legislative autonomy. Likewise has it been admitted publicly, and acknowledged in their diplomatic relations, that the first principle upon which British power must in future rest, is the multiplicity of friends and the security of enemies. Yet, these same statesmen persist, with a senseless and fatal determination, to keep Ireland and the Irish people in a state of perpetual enmity, distrust and often hatred. To my humble mind, their course is nationally as well as politically suicidal. Can they not perceive that by granting to Ireland the boon of Home Rule they would be simply raising up an ally, whose devotedness to the cause of an Empire from which such liberty was secured, would far outweigh that of any other race or country connected with Great Britain? These statesmen—so-called through courtesy—labor for the present, they are devoid of all prophetic vision, and for them the future is entirely hidden by a veil which they will not dare raise. The most loyal man is he, who, glancing down the vista of the yet-to-be, can draw at the same time experience from the past, and with the combined aid of his doubly acquired perception, proclaim the absolute necessity of to-day, creating friends and scattering seeds of true freedom on all sides. And such a man is Edward Blake!

THERE IS A PHYSICAL courage which is frequently displayed on the field of battle; it generally wins for its possessor the honored title of hero. Yet, often do we find the general, or other officer, who can face a hail-storm of bullets without flinching, tremble at the sight of a critical paragraph in the press. He is the personification of bravery, in the eyes of the great world; morally, he is a coward, and a sufferer from the most terrible of all maladies—mental fear. There is another courage; that of the man who can perform a sacred duty despite the most adverse criticism, who can act in accord with the dictates of his conscience, despite the sneers of little men, who can assert a principle that he knows must ultimately prevail, even when that desertion is certain to alienate from him sympathies that he cherishes; in fine, who can take a stand—unpopular for the moment—and maintain the same until such time as his very critics are forced to bow down and acknowledge that he was right. The course of such a man is heroic in the highest, the sublimest sense of the word. While still physically brave, if occasion requires, he is morally courageous. Again, do I say that such a man is Edward Blake!

IT IS TOO LATE IN THE DAY for even his most bitter opponents to question the purity and disinterestedness of his motives. What he has given to the Irish cause in time, money, labor, talents, sacrifices, personal and public—history alone will ever record, and no historian will ever know the full extent of his offering at the shrine of Irish patriot-

ism. When the amendment, proposed by Mr. John Redmond, was voted upon, Mr. Blake voted with the united Irish party. In view of his past history, his career in Canadian politics, his oft repeated and emphatically asserted loyalty to the Empire, the superficial politicians and the sensational, unreflecting press fall into a state bordering on madness, and proclaimed to the world that "Edward Blake voted with the enemies of the British Empire, and by his vote, placed himself upon an equal footing with those who live by promoting national jealousies, and who see in every reverse suffered by the Empire's troops a cause for rejoicing." This is but a general and mild sample of the language hurled to-day, from certain quarters, at Edward Blake. But as well shot arrows at the eagle that soars against the sun, the petty weapons in returning to earth are more likely to injure the one who fired them, than could they in their upward flight reach the strong-pinioned monarch of the empyrean. Poor fools! They cannot see that Blake has looked beyond the narrow horizon of to-day, and that in his see-like vision he has perceived that the solidity of the Empire depends far more upon the granting of self-government to Ireland than it does upon the subjugation of the Boers. It is vastly more important for Great Britain's future stability that the Irish cause should be gained than that the South African republics should be effaced. The triumph of British arms in South Africa could only secure a temporary control over a land where for long generations to come British subjects may expect such an ostracism as they never before experienced, while the success of the united Irish Party in securing political autonomy for Ireland would constitute the very greatest bulwark ever raised for the protection, the expansion, and the permanency of the British Empire. One man saw all this adown the expanse of the future—and that man was Edward Blake!

IN THE DIRECT RATIO of such severe and bitter criticisms, shall Blake rise in the estimation and love of the Irish race. He foresaw all these harsh judgments; he knew beforehand what a fiery furnace he would have to pass through the moment he thus declared himself positively, and despite all ties and considerations, a supporter of Ireland's cause. He occupies a position quite unique to the Irish party. He came there fresh from his experience in Canadian public life, and he came to aid by all the means in his power. His loyalty as a Canadian, and as a British subject has never been disputed by any man; and here will he prove that his very vote for Redmond's amendment was an act of two-fold loyalty or the heroic kind. He was loyal to Ireland and the Irish party in the face of a storm sufficient to make many another man quail; he was loyal to the Empire in giving his sanction to a policy which must eventually become a fortress of strength for the whole Empire. Great Britain owes many a debt of gratitude to Irishmen; and of them one is Edward Blake!

The resolution, or amendment proposed by Mr. Redmond by no means declared in favor of the Boers, nor of any other enemies of the Empire. It contained two leading ideas, namely: that the war should end, and that the South African republics should enjoy Home Rule, or self-government. These two principles found frequent and recent enunciation in Blake's speeches. At Longford a week ago, he declared that the war was unnecessary and unjustifiable; his vote for the amendment was merely the logical action flowing from such an expressed opinion; his long struggle for Irish political autonomy could not be justified were he not prepared to advocate the same rights for every other small and politically unemancipated people; his vote was therefore the public ratification of his own arguments and ideas. Consistency is a jewel, but we see very little of that gem in our day. To be consistent a man must be capable of a resistance that appears to the common eye, almost

suicidal; yet which harmonizes with his loftiest conceptions of the situation. Such is the consistency and loyalty of Edward Blake!

IN THE GREAT MOUNTAIN range of Irish patriotism, there are a few gigantic peaks that tower sublimely above the most elevated level. Some of these are burning volcanoes that cease not to pour forth their destructive torrents of national lava, scorching and deluging all obstacles; others are extinct craters, grown silent under the pressure of circumstances, and yet filled with the rumblings that warn off too close an inspection or any attempt at irritation; again others are lofty summits bearing upon their faces, from base to top, the impress of every season, and rising into that silent solitude, from which the shadow of their influence falls upon the far distant future—of these last one of the grandest examples is Edward Blake!

MEN AND THINGS.

"So far as I have encountered them," said a citizen of the world, "a characteristic of great men is that they have time. They are not in a hurry; their work doesn't boss them, but they boss their work. They don't act as though every minute you stayed was valuable time lost to them; they don't fret and fidget. What time they devote to you appears to be time that they can spare, and take things easy in, and be comfortable. The work seems to be incidental, and it seems as though they could turn to it when the time came and get through with ease; and they always seem, besides, to have strength in reserve. It is a characteristic of the great man that he has time."

The following paragraph appears in the interesting article on Orestes A. Brownson, in the January number of Donahoe's Magazine: "Brownson, returning from a round of lecturing, related that while in Washington, he was one day discussing with Calhoun and Buchanan the necessity of the Catholic Church for salvation, when Daniel Webster joined them, and Buchanan said to Webster: 'We were talking about the Catholic Church, and I, for one, am pretty well convinced that it is necessary to become a Catholic to get to heaven.' 'Have you just found that out?' asked Webster; 'why, I've known that for years.'"

The "London Catholic Times" notices a very strange fact that while the Irish troops formed only twenty per cent. of the force engaged at Tugela river, they constituted seventy per cent. of the slain.

According to the new Catholic Directory just issued in London including ten Coadjutors and five Bishops Auxiliary, the number of archbishops and bishops now holding office in the British empire is 173. There are also a few retired, or without episcopal office, of whom there are in England. The estimated Catholic population of the United Kingdom is nearly five millions and a half, namely: England, 1,500,000; Scotland, 365,000; Ireland, (according to the census of 1891), 3,549,956. Including British America (with a Catholic population of about 2,600,000), Australia, India and all other possessions, the total Catholic population of the British empire is probably ten millions and a half. The Catholic peers and baronets number 97, the Catholic lords who are not peers 18, the Catholic members of the Privy Council 19, the Catholic members of the House of Lords, 32, and the Catholic members of the House of Commons 72, three being returned for English constituencies—Sir John Austin, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, and Lord Edmund Talbot. There are 3,271 priests in Great Britain.

The "London Universe" says:—"The 'Times' having badly burnt its fingers with Fenianism we wonder it would touch the subject with a tongs. It spent tens of thousands upon an effort to connect Parnell and the National League with Fenians and dynamitards, with the result that Pigott bamboozled it with barefaced forgeries. When unscrupulous men find a newspaper eager to pay for a certain kind of 'copy' they are sure to provide it in abundance. After its bitter experience of some years ago the Printing House Square concern is again dabbling in

Fenianism. In Monday's issue there is a column and a half of justification, some of it a dozen years old, and the rest of it new, but certainly not sensational.

The writer rehearses the old story of Dr. Cronin's murder, and the feud which followed it. Now he says the two Fenian parties have been reunited with the common object of doing all the harm they can to England, in whose present difficulty they see Ireland's longed for opportunity. As the result of the reconciliation, we are to expect terrible things, but of what character they are to be the sceptical writer does not appear to know. One of the purposes of the united party is to smash the efforts of England to effect an Anglo-American understanding, and when this is done "England will be without a friend in the world." We are next informed that the executive calls upon the "camps" throughout the United States to furnish a list of unmarried men with military training, who must be doctors, engineers, veterinary surgeons, &c., who would be ready to go anywhere at a moment's notice. One must marvel at the "Times" printing a column and a half of stuff of this character. But Fenianism has always had a fatal attraction for that journal.

IRELAND'S NEW MAYORS.

The "Irish People," in referring to the recent Mayo city elections, says:—

Very little in the election of Mayors for the Irish cities last Tuesday calls for either notice or comment. In Dublin a scheme to elect a Tory fell through, and Mr. Pile was unanimously chosen. The ex-Lord Mayor had evidently been a party to the plan. As "a loyal man" he proposed the name of Councillor Beattie when the corporation set about choosing a High Sheriff. But the feeling of the members was so decidedly against the idea that Mr. Tallon withdrew and the name of Alderman Downes goes first on the list to the Lord-Lieutenant.

Lord Mayor Pile is a broad-minded, energetic and able man, and a Protestant. The Belfast "News-letters" congratulates Dublin on having shown toleration by electing him. That is nothing new in Dublin. The last thing any Catholic in the Corporation thought of was to felicitate himself on the fact that he was not a confirmed brainless bigot. Mr. Pile's religion was never once mentioned all along. Mr. Pile himself, never dreamed of anticipating any opposition on account of his religion. But the thought arose very naturally to the mind of the Belfast creature who described "the mere Irish"—like the Dublin Corporation—as "a contemptible race."

A Catholic has as much chance of becoming Lord Mayor of Belfast as a native-born Samoan has of succeeding the Czar of Russia. The Belfast corporation did a marvellous thing on Tuesday. Having chosen a true blue, Alderman R. J. McConnell, as Lord Mayor, they placed a Mr. Arthur Hamill, a Tory Catholic, third on the list of possible High Sheriffs.

As usual the Council and the gentlemen in the gallery made the Cork election lively. The former Mayor, Councillor Crean, received 14 votes in the first division against 19 for Alderman Fitzgerald, and 22 for Alderman Hegarty. Then the Labor members, with whom Mr. Crean had specially identified himself, retired and Alderman Hegarty was elected over Alderman Fitzgerald by 23 votes to 22.

Mr. John Daly was re-elected at Limerick without opposition. A Tory, Alderman Nelson, won at Waterford against a Parnellite or Redmondite candidate. Faction has the old city in a state of demoralization for the time.

After a "scene" at Wexford, Councillor Hughes beat Alderman Stafford by thirteen votes to ten.

Alderman T. J. Condon, M.P., a staunch and stalwart Nationalist who had previously filled the position with distinction was unanimously chosen Chief Magistrate by the Councillors of his native town of Clonmel. We congratulate Alderman Condon and the good town on the Suir.

Mr. Luko J. Blcock, a sturdy Nationalist, was re-elected at Drogheda. As we have stated elsewhere, Alderman P. A. McHugh, M.P., has been chosen Mayor of Sligo, for the fifth time. The solitary Tory member of the council warmly joined in congratulating the brilliant and indomitable Nationalist.

Alderman McLearn, Tory of course, was re-elected at Derry. Kilkenny is torn by factions. We really can hardly tell who is Mayor

REUNION OF THE IRISH PARTY.

It would be no easy matter to convey to you a fair idea of the actual state of Irish politics. The all-absorbing question of the hour is the union of the different sections of the Parliamentary Party. A better snapshot of the situation could not be given than by analyzing the various speeches delivered on the occasion of the reunion meeting in Room 16, of the House of Commons.

"In the name of Ireland" was the watchword of this significant meeting. It may be noted that Room 16 is next to the famous Room 15, in which so much of the hostility and disunion of the past were fabricated. It might be pleasing to your readers to have an idea of who all were present—for it was truly an assembly, the record of which belongs to history.

The meeting was summoned for one o'clock, and a few minutes to that hour Mr. T. D. Sullivan, M.P., appeared in the corridor, being the first member to respond to Mr. Harrington's requisition. Other members arrived in rapid succession, Mr. Dillon entering the room in conversation with Mr. Jordan. He, however, only remained a few minutes, and returned to the corridor, where he awaited the arrival of Mr. T. P. O'Connor and Mr. McNeill, with whom he re-entered the room. The first quarter of an hour was occupied in discussing the question of admission of the Press, which was eventually decided in the affirmative. The representatives of several Irish newspapers and English Press agencies having entered the room, Mr. Harrington, as Chairman, opened the proceedings proper. On his right sat Mr. T. P. O'Connor and Mr. Dillon, and on his left Mr. Blake. The members present were—Messrs. Mandeville, McNeill, McCarty, Dillon, Blake, T. P. O'Connor, J. G. Farrell, P. Doogan, J. Daly, R. McGee, D. Sherry, M. Flavin, Hogan, J. F. N. O'Brien, E. Crean, Murrighan, Dr. MacDonnell, J. C. Flynn, Capt. Donelan, J. J. Shee, P. J. O'Brien, Count Moore, T. Curran, T. B. Curran, J. Gibney, E. Barry, Dr. Conmins, J. Hammond, T. M. Healy, Maurice Healy, T. J. Healy, T. D. Sullivan, Donald Sullivan, Major Jamison, Englewood, J. Jordan, D. Crilly, Arthur O'Connor, Dr. Fox, D. MacAleese, Curvill, Sir Thomas Esmonde, P. French, B. Molloy, J. E. Rdaund, P. O'Brien, J. P. Hayden, W. Field, J. J. Clancy, and J. H. Parnell.

Letters and telegrams expressing approval of the object of the meeting and regret at inability to attend were received from Messrs. Carow, owing to death in family; Condon, illness; Corbett, illness; Mince, illness; Morris, illness; McCarthy, illness; J. P. Farrell, illness; Power, illness; Tuttle, illness; and Young.

The Chairman delivered a strong and very appropriate speech: Mr. Redmond was mild and persuasive; Mr. Dillon was anxious to know what attitude the Party would maintain towards the United Irish League; he said that several of his absent friends would like to have an answer to his question; Mr. Healy enquired "who the friends were," and, as Mr. Dillon did not give their names, I may here reproduce them. They were:—Dr. Ambrose (Mayo West), Messrs. Wm. Abraham (Cork, N.E.), M. Austin (Limrick), W. P. A. McHugh (Leitrim, N.), P. McDermott (Kilkenny, N.), W. O'Malley (Galway, Connemara), J. Tully (Leitrim, South), and J. Roche (Galway, East).

Then Mr. Dillon asked if it was intended to exclude Mr. Davitt and Mr. James O'Kelly, who were members of the League, from the party; Mr. Redmond declared that he had neither the desire, nor the intention to exclude any Nationalist. Messrs. T. M. Healy and French, moved and seconded a resolution to the effect that Sir Thos. Esmonde, Capt. Donelan and Mr. P. O'Brien, be appointed whips. We will now furnish a few extracts from the most important speeches of the day.

After some pertinent preliminary remarks, the Chairman, Mr. Harrington, said:—

"He was glad to say that, in his intercourse with the members of the different sections into which, unfortunately, the Irish representation had been divided during the past few years, he had found everywhere the

very strongest desire that there should be a close to their unfortunate controversies and unhappy quarrels, and that the Irish representation in the House of Commons should go back to its old fighting policy, when it had the affectionate loyalty of the people of Ireland behind it, and when it had the admiration of the civilized globe in its work and labours. He was sure that in Ireland to-day people were very anxiously watching the proceedings of this Conference, and he felt convinced that everything that was true and genuine in Irish Nationalism was sincerely desirous that in this, the first joint meeting of the Irish Nationalist representation since the unfortunate division of over nine years ago, there should be so friendly an exchange of views and generous a desire to defer to one another's opinions and feelings, as that, if they did not close the controversy, they, at least, would not leave the situation anything worse than it was. Happily for them, a very good feeling had grown up among the people of Ireland, and the cause of reunion was progressing rapidly among the people. *

"They ought to leave nothing to chance. The people were falling into line, but any accident or any difference among leaders might possibly drive them asunder again, and, above all, any attempt to coerce or to influence men's minds or to go back to the bitterness of the quarrel of the past would drive asunder the elements once more brought together in Irish politics. He believed that they there to-day represented sufficient strength, sufficient wisdom, and he hoped sufficient patriotism, to make it impossible that quarrels should continue, and to bring to the Irish people fresh hope and renewed energy in their national struggle. Among all sections of Irish Nationalists there was a genuine desire to bury the quarrel. He respected the prayer of every Irish heart that Providence might guide them to a happy and wise conclusion."

After these wise, mild, encouraging and peace-breathing remarks, Mr. John Redmond, former leader of what was called the Parnellite Party, delivered a masterly address. He said that—"His friends and himself had deliberately formed the opinion that the time had arrived when it was not only desirable, but necessary, in the interests of the country that the Parliamentary representatives of Ireland should be united into one body in the House of Commons, and they were further of opinion that most of the obstacles which stood in the way of reunion in the past had disappeared, and that those which remained, or might be supposed to remain, could easily be overcome. He desired to avoid topics of irritation and controversy in his remarks, and he did not desire to allude to past differences, though he was not there to repudiate his past action. He was there to deal solely with the immediate present and future. It was abundantly clear, judging from public utterances, that in essentials, at any rate, there was practically no difference in the principles and policy advocated by the various sections of the Irish Nationalist members. All sections, judging by public declarations to-day, advocated Parnell's principle of maintaining the Irish Party absolutely independent of English parties, while willing to use them to the interest of Ireland; and further than that, all sections of the Irish Nationalist members, judging by their public declarations, advocated a return to the old policy of combat in the House of Commons.

After dwelling upon present difficulties, he continued:—Any attempt to put humiliation upon one side or the other would be absolutely useless and futile. In the reconstruction of the Party, the small minority—and it was a very small minority—should receive consideration from the strong majority quite out of proportion to their numerical strength at this moment. Under any conceivable arrangement or settlement, the majority must in the future command an enormous advantage numerically, and, therefore, they ought to be able with comparative ease to satisfy their supporters in Ireland. But the position of seven, or eight, or nine men coming

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