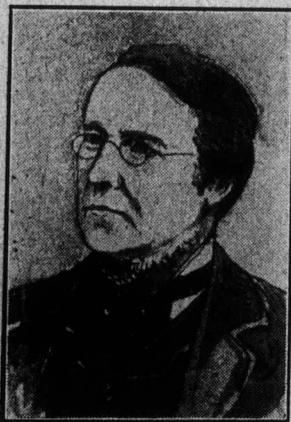


Mr. Blake's Summary Of the Irish Situation.

Speaking in the House of Commons on March 13 last, Mr. Blake, after condemning the limitation of free speech in Ireland and the resulting imprisonment of members, proceeded as follows:—

As a man who had lived his life in an atmosphere saturated with the doctrines of English freedom, he felt all the more strongly the degradation involved in those proceedings in Ireland. Even in England he had seen in late days an impairment of the right of free speech deeply to be deplored. There were sometimes things said in Ireland which he might regret, but that was no reason why the main foundation of the British liberties should be cut away. Free speech was a jewel, and he held that the circumstances of Ireland were such as ought to make this country very tolerant and very lenient as to language employed by a long-suffering people, very careful before exceptional laws were brought into force.

If English members could only realize the dreadful conditions in which the poorer classes in Ireland lived, they would be amazed—not at the occasional agitation and breaches of the law, but at the extraordinary patience and endurance of the people; and he was sure they would not be so inhuman as to refuse amendment of their most unhappy lot. What he had felt for a long time was that Englishmen, responsible for the Government of Ireland, must find it very difficult to reconcile to their consciences their indifference to the real grievances of the Irish people. How many English statesmen apart from those actually for the moment Irish ministers, but yet responsible for the Government of Ireland, had ever visited it in any real sense? He could not acquit those who undertook that responsibility of gross neglect of duty. They saw the main



HON. EDWARD BLAKE.

features of the history of the hundred years; they saw the country seething with wrong; they saw the frightful, unprecedented, absolutely unexampled fact of half the population, besides all the natural increase, despite all its national aspirations, despite its passionate love of home and country disappearing. And yet, although living within a paltry sixty miles of the country, they did not make it the main study of their lives to find out what the conditions were which produced those results, and to remove them. No man was an Imperial Statesman who did not put and keep in the very first place the study and redress of the Irish situation. Was it in human nature that there should be a constant condition of disaffection and disloyalty among any people who had a tolerable existence, a tolerable opportunity of attending to their own affairs, a tolerable condition of prosperity, and some hope for the future of the management of their own country. No, on the contrary it was the general condition of humanity that they paid too little attention to their political affairs. There was too great a disposition to devote one's self exclusively and selfishly to one's own affairs and too little to public affairs. England would be infinitely better off, and better governed, if

the great opportunity which her happy economical and social state afforded to all classes to promote their own interests did not dull, instead of intensifying zeal and interest, in public affairs. When they found a condition of disaffection and disloyalty, such as existed in Ireland for a long time, all history and experience showed that that condition must have a great and substantial cause. Now was it not the greatest interest of those whom he addressed, of those who insisted on maintaining a particular form of Government in Ireland to which the people objected, who refused to give the right of self-government, and who were applying remedies which the Irish members thought were mere palliatives at best, was it not their greatest interest and their double duty to remedy those grievances? It was a melancholy circumstance, that even if the Government set about reformation and redress at once, and worked diligently at it for a long time, their progress must be slow at best. They could not change the face of those wretched congested districts and other like places by Act of Parliament in a day. They had left the people without hope; they had given them no opportunities for thrift; they had taught them no lessons of providence; because the people had nothing to accumulate; and, therefore, they would have to learn by slow degrees the virtues of thrift and providence. Their means were narrower and their lives barer than could be well conceived. They could not be said to live; still less had they a chance to save. Even if land were bought for them and their holdings were enlarged, unless their power of alienation were at first restrained, being without the training of thrift or providence, the same evils which at present existed might be reproduced within a generation. What a fatal stain did such a state of things inflict on the reputation of the great and prosperous controlling Power! What was the position in England? The people there had learned largely thrift and providence. They were not afraid to encourage a man to buy, because they knew he would not throw away his purchase improvidently. In Ireland those unhappy people of the congested districts might have to be treated in their new capacity of owners more or less as minors, because their condition had been so wretched that they had had no opportunity of learning thrift or cherishing even the idea of accumulation, unless by hard work at English harvests to save up a few pence to pay the landlord or the shop debt. He saw the Chief Secretary assenting; but did not he perceive that his assent meant two things; first, the condemnation of that past English rule which had suffered the creation of such a condition, and next the condemnation of that present English rule which did not at once and heroically set itself to the business of those measures of redress whose operation must at best be far too slow? The longer they would take to cure, the more imperative the duty to begin.

With every desire to be just, he could not acquit the Government of appalling responsibility. On the contrary, with the most earnest desire to be fair he there acknowledged he realized the justice and reason of that disaffection existed in Ireland; it was utterly unable to say that it ought not to continue, until the causes which created it were removed. He was there as one poor and humble, but most sincere and earnest witness to the necessity of removing the causes of that disaffection, and of so promoting the blessed day of reconciliation. He believed that all the courses lately pursued by the Government were courses which tended to intensify their difficulties in Ireland. He would suggest to the Government that they should take other ground. They, who said "non possumus" as to self-government for Ireland, had an enormously added responsibility with reference to the condition of the people whom they insisted on governing. As he had said, the history of the century contained hardly an instance of even a serious visit from English responsible Statesmen, save the officials of the Irish Government itself, and yet the country had been through the century seething with discontent. It had often occurred to him that the lines of Tennyson were very applicable to those who were responsible:—

"They live and lie reclined
On the hills like gods together, careless of mankind.
For they smile, they find a music
Centred in a doubtful song."

Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning, though the words are strong;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
Sow the seed and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Till they perish,
Aye, God help them, till they perish!

Myriads by famine and its diseases, myriads more perishing at any rate from Irish soil, but rising again in the great Republic, the standing obstacle to your dream of cordial friendship, implacable till you render justice to the old land. God grant that the ears of members might at length be opened, and that their eyes might perceive the enormous weight of their responsibility. If they would not let the people govern themselves, which was the only radical and effective remedy, they ought, at any rate, to do something to redress the calamities under which those poor creatures groaned. But he agreed with his hon. friend the member for South Tyrone that by the experience of a hundred years the people had been taught the fateful lesson that the only way to open those eyes and to quicken those ears was to agitate and make English Government difficult in Ireland.

It was of this speech that Mr. Massey, Parliamentary correspondent of the London "Daily News," wrote that it ought to be given the widest possible circulation by the Liberal Educational Bureau. The speech was printed separately, and a few copies have reached this country.

A Great Prelate Dead.

Wonderful has been the family of Vaughan, in England, as a source from which the Church has drawn distinguished prelates. Two weeks ago last Saturday Right Rev. Dr. Vaughan, Bishop of Plymouth, England, passed away in his eighty-ninth year, at St. Augustine's Priory, Newton Abbot. The London "Universe" thus speaks of the departed Bishop:—

The venerable prelate, who was deeply loved by his flock, went to Newton Abbot about ten years ago; his wish was to die in the care of the Canonesses of St. Augustine's Priory, and this has been realized. The end, which was more or less expected for some time, nevertheless, came with tragic suddenness. On the previous day Dr. Vaughan had a seizure, and Drs. Scott and Margrave, his medical attendants, were summoned. Up to that time he was apparently in his usual health—or much the same as he had been for some time. Feeling unwell, the Bishop, who had enjoyed his dinner and said prayers during the afternoon, managed to call for assistance. He was got to bed, but was beyond human help, death claiming him at twenty minutes to seven the following morning. The Bishop remained conscious throughout the night, and the last sacraments were administered by the Rev. John Higgins, chaplain of the convent. The sad tidings were immediately wired to the Right Rev. Dr. Graham, his coadjutor and successor, Father Edmund Vaughan, C.S.S.R., his sole surviving brother, who is a priest at Clapham; Cardinal Vaughan, his nephew; Father Bernard Vaughan, S. J., also a nephew, and others. The late Bishop was instrumental in building the Priory, and a niece, Miss May Vaughan, was prioress there. This good lady, however, has been dead nineteen years. There was a Pontifical Requiem Mass sung by Bishop Graham on Tuesday at St. Augustine's Priory.

Changes in Religious Circles.

Sister Quinn of the Grey Nuns for many years associated with St. Patrick's parish, has gone to a new mission of her Order in New Jersey. She will be missed and remembered, especially by the poor, amongst whom she is well known for her great devotion to the sick.

Another religious who recently left Montreal is Sister St. Paula, of the Congregation de Notre Dame, who has been transferred to a house of her Order in one of the Western States of America, beyond Chicago. She performed admirable work during her stay in Montreal.

The Civic Library Question.

(By an Occasional Contributor.)

Much has been written concerning the proposed civic or public library that, with the Carnegie donation as a basis, is intended to be established in Montreal. We are not entirely without misgivings as to the ultimate establishment of such a library. And should it some day, become an accomplished fact, we have not the faintest doubt regarding its certain failure to meet all the requirements of the public for which it is expected to be a boon. As far as the Catholic element is to be affected—and that element represents the vast majority of our population—the library will be worse than useless, unless it has, in every detail, the unqualified approval of our episcopal authority. We still have a vivid recollection of all the turmoil, difficulties, and even irritating law-suits that arose to disturb the public mind and to finally efface the primal cause thereof, when a certain public library was established and carried on in conflict with ecclesiastical opinions. It is easy enough for Mr. Carnegie, considering his untold wealth, to make a many-conditioned donation; it is equally easy for our municipal representatives to decide upon the acceptance of that gift and upon the establishment of a public library; but it is a very different matter when they come down to the practical question of selecting the works that are to constitute the library. We readily concede that each alderman imagines himself to be a competent authority upon the purchase of volumes suitable in every sense for the public. But, without wishing to convey any idea of disparagement, we do not believe that any one public man to-day possesses the necessary qualifications to properly perform such a duty, nor do we think that any committee created for that purpose unless it is prepared to submit its labors to higher censorship, is competent to safeguard the social, moral, religious and educational interests of the people in the matter of a public library.

In this connection we will take the liberty of quoting a couple of passages from an admirable essay, by Thomas Davis, the great Irish Protestant journalist, essayist and poet. Sixty years ago last month Davis wrote as follows:—

"Carlyle says that a library is the true university of our days, where every sort of knowledge is brought together to be studied; but the student needs guides in a library as much as in the university. He needs light and classification. Let a boy loose in a library, and if he have years of leisure and a creative spirit, he will come out a mastermind. If he have the leisure without the original spring he will become a book-worm—a useful help, perhaps, to his neighbors, but himself a very feeble and poor creature. For one man who gains weapons from idle reading, we know twenty who lose their simplicity without getting strength, and purchase cold recollections of other men's thoughts, by the sacrifice of nature."

This again is all very true, but still more applicable to our present purpose is what follows:—

"Just as men are bewildered and lost from want of guides in a library, so are others from an equal want of direction in the purchase of one. Worse than the loss of money, are the weariness from reading dull and shallow books, the corruption from reading vicious, extravagant, and confused books, and the waste of time and patience from reading idle and impertinent books."

We would gladly continue these quotations, and give readers of the "True Witness" some of the ideas of a great mind concerning education, reading and libraries; but such would draw us too far afield from our immediate purpose. We are in presence of a problem—the selection of a public library—the difficulties of which have baffled some of the wisest heads during long generations—from the founders of the famed library of Alexandria, down to the men of learning and science whose brains have been busied with the selection of suitable literature for the libraries of modern Europe. In this matter as in every other one of municipal administration there are public moneys to be expended—the donation becomes a public asset—and there are the vital principles, social, moral and religious, to be safeguarded. It is not sufficient to purchase a site, to erect a building and to fill it

with cart-loads of books. These might be the only necessary considerations were it a mausoleum that was to be built. But that library, if used at all by the general public, must eventually become the intellectual and moral reservoir from which a generation of Canadian citizens will draw the waters of knowledge—either to refresh and invigorate them or to poison and contaminate their lives. Grave is the responsibility of the men who undertake to set up such an institution, for they will either receive credit for the good their work shall have produced, or else they shall bear the responsibility of the social evils, the false principles, the irreligion, the moral degradation, and the eternal misery that a mass of dangerous literature will produce.

Old Letters.

(By a Regular Contributor.)

Heretofore I have been writing about "old time remembrances," and while my stock is far from being exhausted, still I fear that they might become monotonous; consequently I will turn, for a while, to "old letters." I have a goodly few of them; and they are nearly all of considerable historical importance. Before, however, opening my drawer and taking out those bundles of precious communications—all written by hands that have long since been trackless in the grave—I will recall a chapter in a comparatively new work.

Reader have you read "Crawford"? It is by Mrs. Gaskell, and is published by Caldwell Co., New York and Boston. I have no special interest in mentioning these facts; I am not an agent for the work, I do not know who Mrs. Gaskell is, and I never heard of the publishing house until I saw the name on the title page of the little volume before me. But if you have not read "Crawford," you should read it. There is no sensationalism about the story; I doubt if it can be properly called a story. It is, nevertheless, most delightfully home-like picture of an English country village and the society therein found, that it has ever been my privilege to read. The charm of the work grows upon the reader, and I believe that nine out of every ten who have read it will go back to it for a second reading. I am going to preface my few articles on "Old Letters" by reproducing a portion of a chapter from "Crawford," which bears the same title.

It runs thus:—

"I have often noticed that almost every one has his own individual small economies—careful habits of saving fractions of pennies in some peculiar direction—any disturbance of which annoys him more than spending shillings or pounds on some real extravagance." . . . "Now Miss Matty Jenkins was chary of candles. We had many devices to use as few as possible. In the winter afternoons she would sit knitting for two or three hours—she could do this in the dark or by the firelight—and when I asked if I might not ring for candles to finish stitching my wristbands, she told me to keep blind man's holiday." . . . One night, I remember this candle economy particularly annoyed me. I had been very much tired of my compulsory 'blind man's holiday,' especially as Miss Matty had fallen asleep, and I did not like to stir the fire and run the risk of awakening her; so I could not even sit on the rug and scorch myself with sewing by firelight according to my usual custom. I fancied Miss Matty must have been dreaming of her early life; for she spoke one or two words in her uneasy sleep bearing reference to persons who were dead long before. When Martha brought in the lighted candle, and tea, Miss Matty started into wakefulness, with a strange bewildered look around, as if we were not the people she expected to see about her. All through tea-time her talk ran upon the days of her childhood and youth. Perhaps this reminded her of the desirableness of looking over all the old family letters and destroying such as ought not to be allowed to fall into the hands of strangers; for she had often spoken of the necessity of this task, but had always shrunk from it, with a timid dread of something painful. To-night, however, she rose up after tea and went for them—in the dark; for she picked

herself on the precise neatness of all her chamber arrangements, and used to look uneasily at me when I lighted a bed-candle to go to another room for anything. When she returned there was a faint pleasant smell of Tonguin beans in the room. I had always noticed this scent about any of the things which had belonged to her mother; and many of the letters were addressed to her—yellow bundles of love letters sixty or seventy years old."

"Miss Matty undid the packet with a sigh; but she stifled it directly, as it were hardly right to regret the flight of time, or of life either. We agreed to look them over separately, each taking a different letter out of the same bundle and describing its contents to the other before destroying it. I never knew what sad work the reading of old letters was before that evening, though I could hardly tell why. The letters were as happy as letters could be—at least those early ones were. There was in them a vivid and intense sense of the present time, which seemed so strong and full, as if it could never pass away, and as if the warm living hearts that so expressed themselves could never die, and be as nothing to the sunny earth. I should have felt less melancholy, I believe, if the letters had been more so. I saw the tears stealing down the well-worn furrows of Miss Matty's cheeks, and her spectacles often wanted wiping. I trusted at last that she would light the other candle, for my own eyes were rather dim, and I wanted more light to see the pale-faded ink; but no, even through her tears, she saw and remembered her little economical ways."

And the letters were all read, and "We must burn them, I think," said Miss Matty; "no one will care for them when I am gone." And one by one she dropped them into the middle of the fire, watching each blaze up, die out, and rise away, in faint, white, ghostly semblance, up the chimney, before she gave another to the same fate."

I cannot tell why I have copied out these disjointed extracts, unless it be that I was struck by the strange coincidence of reading "Crawford" on the very night that I had made up my mind to go over all my collection of Old Letters. I have read a couple of hundred of them and have consigned the nine-tenths of them to the flames, possibly for the same reason as that given by Miss Matty—namely, that "no one will care for them when I am gone." But amongst them I found about twenty that I can never bring myself to destroy, because they were written by friends whose memories shall ever be cherished, and whose pen; had, at one time or another, traced sentences that deserve to be perpetuated. Apart from that score of old letters, I have come upon a bundle of correspondence, the writers being men and women, who have played a conspicuous part in history of the past century. From these I purpose selecting a few that I will give to the readers of the "True Witness." As an illustration of the sentiment that prompts me to go over again those old letters, I will take one out of the bundle, and allow it to serve as an introduction. It is as follows:

House of Commons,

"Ottawa, 17th March, 1894.

"My Dear—

"Greeting on Ireland's patronal feast. I have a sprig of real shamrock, sent me from a Wicklow vale, which I sport on my breast to-day. Do you know that I always considered the breast and not the hat, or cap, the proper place for a shamrock on St. Patrick's Day? It seems to me that over the heart, and not upon the head should the emblem appear. The head may fail in its judgment—it is human to err—but an Irishman's heart never fails in love for the Old Land. You told about a letter of Thomas Francis Meagher's that you have. Keep it, my boy! No matter what its contents, no matter how short or trivial it may be, that letter is a sacred relic. The premature and mysterious death of its author—after coming safely through the perils of the Irish rebellion and the grim dangers of the American conflict—sets the seal of historical interest as well as that of national importance upon that small piece of paper. Success to you in your literary project. . . . Ireland's great saint be your inspiration is the sincere wish of yours ever faithfully.

N. F. DAVIN, M.P."

Needless to say that I have followed this advice regarding the letter in question, and that I have kept equally secure the one penned by the brilliant, and also ill-fated Irishman, whose name I have given.

Ballad

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