

GREAT SPEECHES.

BY NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN.

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*Atque alius etiam dicendi quasi virtutes sequatur ;
brevitatem, si res petat.*—Cic.

MORE than two years have passed away since I laid my pen aside. During that period law and duties akin to legal pursuits have engrossed my time ; and it is with some diffidence I venture to write on any subject foreign to my immediate studies ; for it is possible that if I ever had any right to appear, even as the meanest recruit in the army of letters, that right is gone ; I have been too long away from parade ; the shibboleth of expression entitling me to admittance has, perhaps, become corrupted amid the wrangle of the courts, and the jargon of living customs borrowed from a dead past. But inasmuch as what I have to say, apart wholly from form, is calculated to do good to Canada,—calculated, I dare believe, to prove helpful to the generous young men occupied in fitting themselves for life's duties,—ardent and unsoiled spirits whose hopes are tinted with a light which is the herald of a larger day—I will, issuing like Gareth from the smoke and din of a lowlier office, attempt a little knightly service. The time necessary for that careful workmanship called for by even the humblest essay is not at my command. I shall, therefore, trusting to the reader's indulgence, put down my thoughts as they arise.

During the present session I have availed myself of every hour I could snatch from laborious duties, to hear, on a question of the largest dimen-

sions, the politicians and statesmen in our Canadian Parliament ; and men, not in the front rank, but occupying prominent positions in both the great parties, observing this, have asked me how our leaders would compare with those of the British House of Commons. Their wonder at my replies would alone have suggested this writing, to which, however, as will be seen, I should have been prompted by yet other considerations. A certain sentiment of scorn mingled in my mind with a resentment not unrighteous, when astonishment was expressed that we should have men in Canada who would well compare with, who might stand up to, the best men of any other country.

There is a prevalent idea that the disparity between the conditions of education in the United Kingdom and those of Canada is so great that to believe Canadians could be the equal of Englishmen is like rebellion against the laws of nature. Men born and bred in old countries have, let it be at once admitted, some advantage from the point of view of culture we do not possess. But 'the wine,' says the too cynical, but observant soldier—'the wine she drinks is made of grapes.' We are of the same blood as the men of the United Kingdom. We have not, indeed, the monuments of antiquity, the picture galleries, the old cathedrals, the ancient seats of learning, the cities over which historical forms seem to