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God's in His heaven,
All's right with the world.
—(BROWNING.)

London, Wednesday, March 29.

Edward Blake in England.

The reception of Hon. Edward Blake, M.P., by the British public has been all that the most ardent admirer of the Canadian statesman could desire. It is true that his style has been snarled at by a few wisacres on the Conservative press, but the series of addresses on public topics which Mr. Blake has delivered in leading old world cities within the last six months have made a distinct impression on the public mind, and we believe have in no small degree contributed to the triumph of the Liberal cause in the recent bye-elections. The Bradford Observer tells its readers that, "Mr. Blake is a tower of strength. His vast experience, his ripened statesmanship, his largeness of nature, intellect and will, secure for him without an effort a commanding position in the councils of the party." The London Echo, though in some degree exhibiting hostility to the cause that he represents, speaks of Mr. Blake's great speech in the House of Commons in these terms:

"Many of his sentences are long paragraphs, many of his parentheses are goodly speeches, having an exordium and peroration; and nearly every one of his periods is a peroration. One or two sentences 'panned' out into 300 or 400 words; and the torrent was so rapid that the swiftest followers of Mr. Pittman fell hopelessly behind in the pursuit. But there is sense in it all; there is culture; there is good taste; there is brains; there is, above all, an absence of incrimination, insinuation, abuse."

"Hon. Edward Blake's speech on Wednesday night was a magnificent demonstration of the arguments in favor of Home Rule for Ireland. To hear him was to be convinced," candidly affirms the Postretract Telegraph. The London Sun, referring to Mr. Blake's notable reply to Mr. Chamberlain, graphically points out that

"An answer followed point, and as sharp logic tore to shreds every successive bit of the poor network of fallacy and word-fencing—as the House rose gradually to excitement, admiration, passion, raging to almost hysterical outbursts of delight—Joe's face became visibly longer, and one could almost imagine him visibly shrinking. Then the speech was over. There were mighty cheers and waving of hats, and enthusiastic shakings of the hands."

And the Christian World, in its inimitable review of Parliamentary proceedings, gives this pen portrait of the honorable gentleman:

"While he (Mr. Chamberlain) had been speaking a member on Irish benches opposite taking copious notes. Sits next to Sexton; don't know his face; who is he? Directly Chamberlain down, up he springs to his feet. 'Mr. Blake,' says the speaker. This is the Canadian statesman, then. Let us note him. A strong, stout-built, middle-aged man of average height, massive face, clear of whiskers or beard, plenty of dark brown hair, locks of it falling over one side of his ample forehead and reaching to his eyebrow. Want to see him put his hand up and push hair back out of his eyes; but no! evidently it is accustomed to be worn there. He has a sheaf of notes in his right hand, fastened together at one corner. He stands up square and cool, and begins to commend the Liberal party and to praise its great leader for standing so staunchly for the freedom of his father's country. A great opportunity now to pacify Ireland forever and win the love of the Irish race. Presently he is on the track of our and their arch enemy. Shows up his past history; was a Home Ruler once, though so bitter an opponent now. Step by step he takes up his objections, and literally pulverizes them, to our infinite delight. Notes in one hand, he makes ample action with the other, and goes for the Birmingham crockery till he has smashed it all up. It was an admirable speech, both in tone, in matter and in manner. As he drew to its close, he dealt with things reserved from the Irish Parliament, and showed that they were all things in which Ireland had a common interest with the rest of Great Britain, and through her continued representation in the Imperial Parliament she would have a proportionate voice in dealing with them. As to 'No Church Establishment,' he rejoiced that the principle of religious equality was to be engraved on the face of the new constitution. He hoped that the emphasis placing of it there would help to bring about the adoption of the same principle in Great Britain herself. He said no nation had had lessons on the evil of the absence of religious equality more cruelly burnt into their memories than the Irish had. He was confident that the passage of this bill would change discontent and hatred into content and goodwill. And he exhorted us to try and make the beautiful prayer daily offered in the House, for the knitting together of the hearts of all within this realm, a reality in the United Kingdom. In my judgment this was the best speech which has been made in this great debate."

Could praise be stronger? It is all the more valuable coming as it does from a journal of enormous circulation and influence in the homes of England. In his address at Cambridge University also, Mr. Blake scored a marked success. He was loudly cheered, and the professor who moved a vote of thanks to him remarked that "they had now got what they had long been searching for—a man who would give them a speech which should deal with practical politics as a practical statesman did, and which at the same time should be tinged with the true academic spirit." Cambridge University men have a reputation for acumen, and their testimony to Mr. Blake's great ability is therefore most valuable. But it is in the great industrial centers that Mr. Blake has taken the strongest hold. In Manchester, on March 15, he was entertained to dinner by the Reform Club—a body embracing in its membership a very large number of leaders in the movement for progressive legislation. The address he then delivered put the question of the extension of local self-government to Ireland so fairly that we make no excuse for giving copious selections from it. Taking up the immediate prospects of the Liberal party, Mr. Blake said:

No Cause for Despondency.

"He remembered very well, a little before the opening of the present session of Parliament, when there was a very great feeling of depression and despondency amongst Liberals. Like Liberals all the world over, they were a little too much disposed to take their opinion of the situation from their adversaries, who proclaimed with very great emphasis their belief that Mr. Gladstone's Government had not the slightest title to introduce a measure. It was quite true, they said, that Parliament had pronounced a sentence of decapitation of the Tory Government, but it had not passed a vote of confidence in the Liberal Government. (Laughter.) Hence they looked upon it as an act of presumption on Mr. Gladstone's part to announce in the Queen's speech that he was about to propose various remedial measures. That matter was very soon settled, and on terms very satisfactory. Farly owing, he thought, to the admirable tactics of the Government in the early part of the session, and partly owing to the reverse description of tactics on the side of the Opposition, that degree of despondency which existed in some quarters passed away. The chill passed off, and the fever came on, and it was thought they were going to have smooth sailing, not merely for that great measure of home rule, but for many other important measures. He was not nearly so much depressed as some people were. He saw that the position, while full of difficulty, was also full of hope. The Government had the support of those who were invested with rank, title and wealth, had an opportunity of rallying to their side the masses of the nation upon their realizing the fact as a fact necessary to be acted upon at once that England had become in substance and reality more than ever before in her history a democratic country and required democratic advanced legislation. (Cheers.) He hoped, and the hope was realized beyond his expectation, that the Liberal Government would come forward with propositions for legislation upon topics of interest to the people of Britain as well as with the great measure of home rule for Ireland—of overshadowing interest, as he believed, to Britain as well as to Ireland, but still not of such exclusive interest as to prevent an earnest attempt for a Liberal Government to give effect to the pressing legislation for Britain." (Hear, hear.)

The Whole Programme Indorsed.

"To the charge that the programme of the Government was a dishonest one, because it was impossible for any Government to pass in a single session of Parliament more than one, or at most two, contentious measures, he replied that the difficulty of passing measures depended on the character of the Opposition, and if the Liberal-Unionists were still Liberal in reality they could and ought to give their support to the Government in dealing with all Liberal matters that were unconnected with home rule. It was time, he thought, that their pretence of Liberalism should be either made good or got rid of altogether. (Cheers.) For himself, he had to say that as an old Liberal, and one who had all his life sympathized with the views of the Liberal party, he rejoiced to see this programme brought forward."

A Substantial Settlement Needed.

"He was present that evening not as a Liberal, but as an Irish Nationalist member, and he believed that the position of an Irish Nationalist member to-day was one as important to the true interests of this empire, of this so-called United Kingdom—shortly, he hoped, to be a really united kingdom under the beneficent operation of home rule—as that of any other member could be. It was a difficult position, one in which he was obliged to reckon with the feelings created by centuries of wrong and of misgovernment, and at the same time with the forces of public opinion in this island, and he had to consider not merely the difficulties of text, but the probable difficulties that would arise under the new dispensation, and to see that there was a substantial settlement of the question that had so long absorbed their attention."

Belief in Union of Hearts.

"Much though they might deplore what had happened during the last seven years, great gains had resulted. The assent of the Irish people in Ireland and all over the world to the Home Rule Bill would be infinitely more solid, real, substantial and valuable than any assent which might have been procured on the spur of the moment in 1886. (Applause.) During those seven years the work of reconciliation, which must be its nature be a slow work, had been proceeding. The people of Ireland had been taught that it was no sudden spurt of enthusiasm that moved the Liberals in 1886 to adopt the new Irish policy, and that through stern and difficult and distressing they were willing to adhere to it. (Applause.) He did not think they could overvalue the change of feeling and condition of thought which had been created in Ireland. He believed in the union of hearts."

Civil and Religious Equality.

"His fundamental objection to the whole course of argument on the part of their opponents was that they insisted upon two propositions which he wholly denied. The first was that there existed an irreconcilable division and alienation between the people of Ireland and the people of Britain, and that do what you would you could not obtain a better state of feeling. The second was that between the majority and the minority in Ireland there was a division incapable of being removed. A state of feeling, no doubt, had been aroused in Ireland, amounting in some quarters almost to panic, and nothing could restore confidence except experiences of the course of events under home rule. But experience would do it. He belonged himself to the minority, and if he believed for a moment that it was possible that the majority in Ireland would use their powers to oppress the minority he would be the last to say they should be entrusted with such powers. It was worth keeping in mind that the struggle of the majority of the Irish people for generations past had been against the ascendancy of a

minority. But what they had been fighting for was not ascendancy or domination, but the great fundamental principals of religious and civil equality. (Applause.) The experiment about to be made was a noble one. It was an appeal to the better feelings of humanity. It was founded on a belief that enmities and hostilities would cease when the causes which produced them ceased, and that a better state of feeling would ensue. Produce that better state of feeling and it would solve everything else." (Cheers.)

Proceeding to discuss the bill for granting local self-government to Ireland, Mr. Blake indorsed the retaining of Irish representatives in the Imperial Parliament. He pointed out that at present the Irish members made and unmade governments, and suggested that if their presence were tolerable now it would be much more so when they appeared in the House in reduced numbers, and with the influences removed which had in the past compelled them to look at measures, not upon their merits, but as to the way in which they would operate for or against Irish interests.

Home Rule Locally All Round.

"He recognized the probability that the granting of home rule to Ireland would lead, gradually of course, to the extension of the principle of self-government to England, Scotland and Wales. He had never disguised the opinion that this measure was a transition measure, in a sense. He believed that the British people were taking a step after their own fashion—going a certain distance at a time, and not attempting to make a new heaven and a new earth by one operation. (Laughter and cheers.) After they had tried the experiment they would, he had no doubt, come to the conclusion that a greater transfer of the powers of government to the several communities composing the British nation would be advantageous to all the parties concerned."

Not a Mede and Persian Law.

"Of course it might be said there were anomalies in the scheme. The British constitution bristled with anomalies. There was no one portion that might not be made unworkable, but the common sense and power of the people would speedily remove any disturbing element of that kind, and the common sense and power of the British people were not going to be diminished by this bill. On the contrary, if the position in the future were found to be intolerable they could easily remedy the evil, and they would have a right to do so." (Hear, hear.)

The Restrictions Indorsed.

"As to the restrictions in the bill, he saw no objection to them whatever. It was no humiliation to have inserted in a written constitution what were after all the fundamental principles of civil and religious liberty. It had been done in the constitution of the United States and in other constitutions; and if the British constitution were a written constitution, based on a convention or plebiscite, we would ourselves incorporate some of these restrictions. If we did not we would be making a mistake. For his own part he would write the restrictions in letters of gold. (Applause.) They would have two effects. One effect would be to prevent open violation. If they were openly violated, or if attempts were made to violate them in letter or spirit, the law would be void. But there was another effect. They laid down the lines on which the Irish Government should proceed, and if the Irish Legislature should so prostitute its powers and be guilty of such bad faith as to violate the spirit of those restrictions, there was ample power in the Imperial Parliament to reassert the principles of civil and religious liberty. On the other hand, the Irish people would see in those things their charter of liberty. So long as they kept within those lines, the Imperial Parliament, the Duke of Devonshire said he thought it unlikely that these things would happen, but then such things were possible. They could not, he answered, conduct affairs of State on possibilities; they must conduct them on probabilities; and on a consideration of the merits with actuate mankind in general; and would it not be a suicidal policy for any leader of the Irish people to place himself in a position which might call for interference from the Imperial Parliament? He therefore discarded the suggestion as to the possibilities as unworthy of consideration."

Respect for Religious Scruples.

"With reference to the provisions for respecting the religious scruples of parents of children attending the public schools in Ireland, Mr. Blake considered them sufficient and perfectly fair. Therefore, while he regarded these restrictions as not neutral in one sense, he looked upon them as highly useful in another sense, and trusted that the views of the Duke of Devonshire and others that the present differences were doomed—he was going to say by some decree of Providence, but he would not say that—that the present differences were doomed by an inflexible rather than supernatural power to be perpetual would be dismissed, and that Englishmen would act in the hope and confidence and belief that in doing a great act of justice and relying on the better feelings of humanity they would reap their reward. By doing this act of justice they would not rob Parliament of any of the power it now had; they would have not merely all the power they now possessed, but a greater power than they could ever have under the present dispensation of correcting any wrong or crime which might be committed by those to whom they had committed the government of Ireland. Therefore, he said, give them that which they asked—the power to manage their own local concerns; give them that power which we would insist upon having for ourselves; lay broad the foundation of a real union between the two kingdoms, and restore to efficiency and power and dignity the great and venerable Parliament of England. Then we would have a United Kingdom in the truest sense—a kingdom united by bonds of peace and love." (Applause.)

The masterly address was next day referred to by the Manchester Guardian as worthy of the interesting and original figure in contemporary politics who delivered it. Mr. Blake, in replying to a vote of thanks, dropped a remark that will interest his friends in Canada. He said

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that it was love of the land of his forefathers that had induced him to accept a seat in the Imperial Parliament. When the battle for local self-government was over he would return to his own fireside in Canada. He had formed too many ties in Canada not to wish to return and to reside there the remainder of his life.

Mr. Blake's ability is recognized on all hands. Latest advices from Great Britain are to the effect that he has twenty requests to address mass meetings for one that he can accept. The honorable gentleman will spend the Easter holidays in the bracing northern air of Scotland, first visiting Mrs. George Brown in Edinburgh.

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