

Justin McCarthy at Home.

By M. M'D. BODKIN, K.C.

The Independent Weekly Magazine of New York in a recent issue contained the following:—

I had first met Justin McCarthy in the House of Commons when he was Chairman of the Irish National Party, of which I was a raw recruit. From the beginning I was strongly attracted by the genial, cultured, kindly-natured man, and coveted his friendship. But he was a famous veteran in literature, while I was but a nameless novice, and there is no service in which the reverence of the novice for the master is more profound. So I always addressed him respectfully as "Mr. McCarthy," till he took me to task for it.

"Matt, my boy," he said to me one day in the smoking-room of the House of Commons, "I am always 'Justin' to my friends, and I want to be 'Justin' to you."

So from that day out I counted myself happy among his friends, and he was 'Justin' to me. In truth he has been from that day

"The dearest friend to me, the kindest man, the best conditioned and unwearyed spirit."

In doing courtesies.

For over three whole years, week in, week out, while the House of Commons was in session, it was my privilege to sit at the same table with him, delighted with his humor, light and playful as the dancing sunbeams, and his mellow experience of men and things. Two bonds held our comradeship close—we were engaged in the same cause and in the same profession. Night after night this distinguished veteran of literature, this respected leader of the Parliamentary Party, his simple, earnest, over, he retired to the upper gallery of the House of Commons, the only place in the House secure from interruption, to devote long hours to monotonous work for the daily Press, cheerfully content, in spite of his abilities, his services, and his position.

"To give, that he might live— His daily toil for daily fee."

He had, in common with his colleagues, abandoned by self-denying ordinance all prospects of reward, shut himself out from place, power, and emolument. This leader of the "mercenary" Irish Party, as they are scornfully styled by placemen present and prospective, was worthy of his colleagues.

Justin McCarthy has at least this reward for his long and hard service that it was under his leadership that the Home Rule Bill of Mr. Gladstone was passed through the House of Commons.

But I had resolved to avoid politics in this desultory sketch, and with apologies for one brief lapse from my resolution I will come as quickly as may be to my recent visit to Westgate-on-Sea, which I set out to describe.

Justin McCarthy left the House of Commons, as I did, at the close of the session, and I saw him no more till a few weeks ago, when urgent business carried me to London. I received a warm invitation from my dear old friend to visit him at Westgate-on-Sea, to whose bracing air the commands of a doctor confined him. There, "far from the madding crowd," he lives a life of lettered ease in the genial companionship of his son and daughter. The family triumvirate all combined to make his invitation irresistible.

An incident occurred on the journey from London which illustrated to my special advantage in what universal respect the genial literary veteran is held. I got into talk with a gentleman who was the only other occupant of the railway carriage, on political questions, and discussed Mr. Chamberlain, his views and career and prospects, from standpoints directly opposed and in language as strong as courtesy would allow. In the course of our conversation I chanced to mention that I was going to see Justin McCarthy at Westgate-on-Sea, and my companion was warm in praise of his works.

Now, personally, I happen to be the worst traveller in the world, wherever I go I leave a train of lost luggage behind me. So it was quite natural that when the train stopped at Westgate-on-Sea, in the midst of an interesting conversation, and I saw Miss McCarthy waiting on the platform, I should at once jump out, leaving my bag behind me on the rack. Some hours later the bag came back by special messenger from four stations

away, where my fellow-traveller stopped, with a polite note intimating that the fortunate mention of the fact that I was the guest of Justin McCarthy enabled him to restore it.

I found my dear old friend as well and strong as when I parted from him more than a decade ago in the House of Commons. His memory was as vivid, his humor as playful, his conversation as full of freshness and savour. He is delightfully situated at Westgate-on-Sea, in a corner villa in view of the sea, with a smaller villa over the way which serves as a guest-house for his weekend visitors from London, and in which I was made most comfortable. Now and again, as he told me, his heart was stirred by an almost irresistible desire to look on Ireland again. But the doctor insists on the bracing air of Westgate-on-Sea, and the health he has enjoyed there confirms the doctor's commands.

The weather during my too brief stay there was most opportunely inclement, windy and wet, making out-of-door excursions impossible. My kind friends were distressed, and I was delighted. They had planned some pleasant excursions. I was to see the spot where Julius Caesar himself wet to the skin for the sake of rebuking his too flattering courtiers, who I always thought had the best of that experiment. I was to see the spot where Julius Caesar first landed on the British coast. Indeed, Justin assured me that he had always regarded the selection of this particular spot by the famous invader as a delicate anticipatory compliment to himself.

All these things I was to have seen, and didn't see, and couldn't see, and I much rejoiced thereat. I had come to visit, not Westgate-on-Sea, but Justin McCarthy, and the weather kindly decreed that I was to have him all to myself during the visit.

We went to Mass together in the morning in a covered vehicle, and left the house no more that day, but sat together in his cozy den, book and picture lined, our toes on the fender, and talked the unheeded hours away. Truly such a talk was a rare treat. It was the cream of a busy, useful, happy life, stretching back almost to the middle of the nineteenth century, "the abstract and brief chronicle of the time."

There was no taint of personal vanity or personal bitterness in his reminiscences. His mind, to my thinking, is as incapable of harboring an unworthy thought as the soil of Ireland is of harboring a snake. He had in his time, it seemed to me, met every one worth meeting, and seen everything worth seeing in the Old World and in the New.

What a list it is of his personal acquaintances and friends! In politics there were Lord John Russell, Cobden, Bright, Gladstone, and Disraeli, and Bismarck; in literature, Browning, Tennyson, Swinburne, Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, John Stuart Mill and a host of others. For this list makes no pretension to be complete. I have merely set out at random the names that cropped up in the course of our conversation. Even now I bethink myself that the category omits the literary giants of America—Lowell, Emerson, Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, with all of whom he was on terms of familiar friendship.

It was pleasant for one who had read and worshipped afar to meet those great men almost at first hand to be introduced by me who knew them so well. But it is a pleasure not to be passed on. It would be quite impossible to convey in written words the savour of our familiar talk. It is the slight touches that tell in the picture. I knew these men better from some passing phrase, some familiar incident told by one who saw and heard, than had I known them in elaborate biography.

Justin McCarthy was naturally full of admiration for Gladstone, with whom he had been brought in specially close relations during the Home Rule Parliament, when they led respectively the allied forces of the composite majority that carried the Bill. He admired, as all must admire, the splendid biography of Mr. Morley, but he seemed to feel, as myself have felt, that it was emphatically Morley's Gladstone—not Boswell's, not another's.

A creature for too pure and good For human nature's daily food.

For my own part I should have liked to see that stately portrait supplemented by a genial, gossipy, eminently human sketch by Justin McCarthy himself.

Of John Bright he had much to tell. He considered him at his best a greater orator even than Glad-

stone. "He shot his arrow higher," was his phrase. Justin McCarthy's editorship of the "Morning Post" brought him in frequent and friendly communication with John Bright, who held a place on the advisory board. In those days John Bright's sympathy with Ireland was intense. The violence of the Fenians did not in the least affect it. Even the sympathetic Irish editor was not strong enough for this British enthusiast.

"We have to consider the feelings of our readers and the interests of the paper," explained Justin McCarthy.

"You have first of all to consider the interests of truth and justice," retorted John Bright.

John Stuart Mill, of whom he had many charming things to tell, was not less earnest than John Bright in his Irish sympathies. I had a wonderful picture of this shy, retiring scholar and philosopher taking active part in a boisterous Irish demonstration in favor of amnesty for Irish political prisoners.

Tennyson. Justin McCarthy found a little stiff and self-conscious of his own genius:—

"As if the winds Blew his own praises in his eyes"

But Browning, whom he knew much more intimately, he described as the most unostentatious and charming of companions, full of human sympathy and sprightly humor. In his everyday talk, I learned, there was no touch of the verbal obscurity which in his poems is such a stumbling block to the uninitiated—myself among the number.

I cannot hope to compress within the limits of this most elastic sketch the details of that delightful long day at the seaside. A little trait or incident here and there is possible at best.

Justin McCarthy's first meeting with Bismarck was, he told me, specially memorable to him by reason of the unavailing toil with which he furnished up his German for the ordeal.

To his surprise and delight, Bismarck, speaking in excellent English, bade him talk in that language if he had no objection.

"I am very proud," the great German said, "of the extent and variety of my English. I flatter myself I could interchange slang with a London cabman."

In America Justin McCarthy's experiences were almost as varied and as pleasant as at home.

He told me that on one occasion he was able to confound a Yankee who was boasting somewhat arrogantly of his knowledge of the States, by the quiet intimation that he, an Irishman, had travelled through and through every State in the Union, and visited almost every town to be found on their maps.

The Yankee guessed that "left him standing."

One American literary experience Justin McCarthy had as delightful as can well be imagined.

On the occasion of his first trip to New York he had, for the first time, submitted "a longish short story" for publication in Harper's Magazine, and was gratified, not merely by a notification of the acceptance of the story with a handsome accompanying cheque, but the further intimation that the editor would be glad

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if he could make it convenient to call.

Of course he made it his convenience to call. What young author could resist so flattering and so promising an invitation?

The conversation opened with a compliment. The editor was delighted with the story. Did the author think he could let him have some more about the same length on commission?

The author rather thought he could. "About how many would the editor require?"

"Shall we say about a hundred?" replied the editor.

"You may imagine my amazement and delight," said Justin McCarthy, rejoicing in the retrospect of that magnificent piece of good fortune.

It was, in truth, a splendid commission, and it worked itself out magnificently, he told me, to the last word of the hundred stories and the last dollar of the hundred cheques.

Outside the Arabian Nights probably there was never such a literary series. A scribbler of fiction myself, in a small way, I declare I can imagine no more fascinating experience for an author.

Justin McCarthy wandered at his own sweet will through the wide, variegated regions of the United States, moving where he liked, staying where he liked, idling when he liked, working when he liked, and finding in his wanderings and idlings the local color for the hundred stories that paid the expenses of this unexampled holiday. I had myself a vicarious delight in listening to so delightful an experience.

So it chanced that Justin McCarthy made friends in America as many and as distinguished as at home.

I remember a little incident that occurred when I was in Parliament which, though not directly concerned with this visit, comes in appropriately here. A distinguished American showed me in the strangers' smoking-room a little book containing the rules and the names of the members of a once famous literary club of Boston, to which the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table makes delightful allusion. Every great

name in American literature during the nineteenth century was there, as president, vice-president, or ordinary member: Holmes, Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Hawthorne, and the rest.

Turning the leaves we came to one page that was almost blank. At the top of this page was the title "Honorary Members." In the center a single name:

JUSTIN MCCARTHY.

Could any man desire a higher compliment?

As our day slid by in desultory delightful gossip, whose even flow never halted nor lagged, the signed photos on the wall, the signed books on the shelves or tables, were fertile in reminiscences.

Just one illustration and I have done. In a conspicuous place over the chimney-piece I noticed a large photo of an old lady in whose face sweetness and dignity were wonderfully combined. She was, I learned, the wife of Lord John Russell, who was a very special friend of Justin McCarthy's, and had sent him this signed photo, with a warm expression of regard, a little before her death. Our talk naturally switched on from her to Lord Russell, whom

also Justin McCarthy knew well, and so we were carried away back to the days of the great Napoleon, for Lord John Russell knew Napoleon, and as a young man visited him at Elba.

On that occasion, as Lord John afterwards told Justin McCarthy, Napoleon bade the English people beware of Wellington.

A few more victories," he said, "and Wellington will grow so popular with the army that he will seize the crown."

It was in vain that Lord John strove to explain that the British Constitution rendered such a design impossible.

Napoleon merely smiled and shook his head as one that knew better.

While we talked there came to our ears the faint patter of the typewriter from an adjacent room, where Justin Huntly McCarthy was busy translating into drama one of his charming new novels. At dinner time he told us triumphantly that he had completed an act and a bit over, while we had idled through the day with our feet on the fender.

Let it not be thought, however, that Justin McCarthy himself habit-

(Continued on Page 8.)



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