

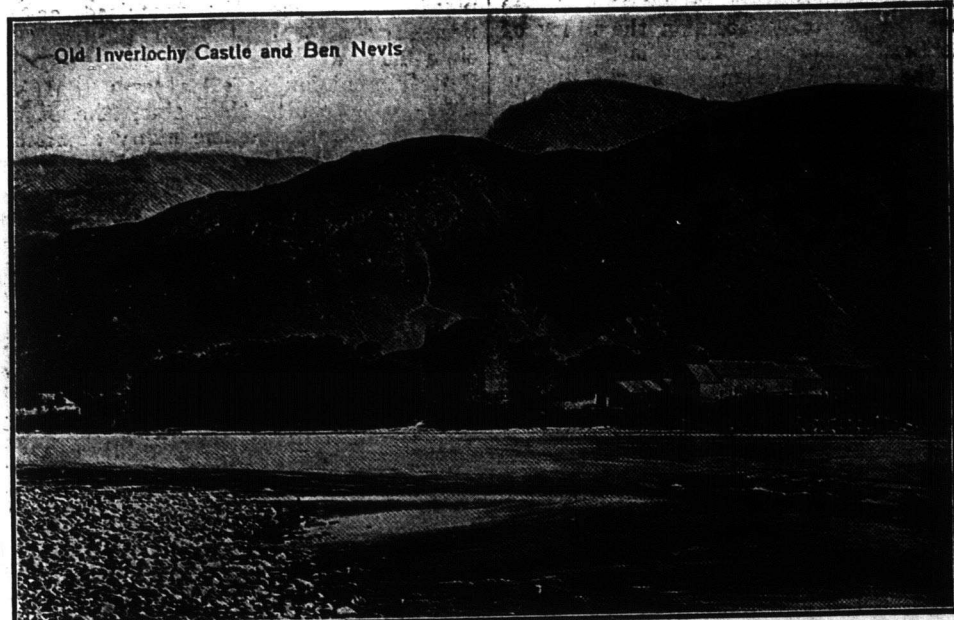
It is idle to speculate whether England would have denied to Ireland the right of immigration if she could have done so. Personally, I have often been inclined to think that she was rather glad to have the Irish go. Ireland is the only country in Europe whose population has decreased. Seventy years ago she had eight million souls; today there are less than four million. And anyone who knows Irish families knows well that this cannot be attributed to race suicide. Immigration has done it. England may have only half as many discontented subjects left on the island, but she has more discontent, for those who remain are encouraged and supported in their struggle out of the prosperity of those who have gone. Even in this Ireland has been the gainer rather than England.

But there are two great wrongs more deeply entrenched than all. One was the withholding of the land—the soil of the island—from its cultivators and rightful owners; the other the denial of the right of self-government accorded by the British Constitution to every other civilized race under its jurisdiction. As to the lands, the evil of absentee landlordism, at its best, was obvious enough. But when, as in the case of Ireland, the natural ignorance of, and indifference to, conditions on the part of the absent landlords was supplemented by the insolent hostility of the resident agent the conditions were worse than unbearable. Rack-rent and ruin stalked hand

There was a time when a statesman could orate in behalf of more democracy in England and more coercion in Ireland at the same time and with the same breath; but that day is passed. If the English people are entitled today to absolutely unfettered self-government, the Irish people are entitled to at least some degree of self-government.

It used to be the stock argument of Englishmen that the Irish could not govern themselves; that they were hot-headed, intemperate and undisciplined. It is not surprising that the genial sons of Erin, with their quick, volatile temperament, their warm hearts, and sudden impulses, should seem to the stolid, beef-eating, porter-drinking Englishman somewhat wild. It is not the Irishman's fault, however, if the Englishman takes spirit for intemperance. Inject the same Saxon blood into the Irishman, feed him on beef and beer and conquest for a thousand years, and he would probably become stodgy enough to suit even the House of Lords. If the capacity for self-government means an open-like submissiveness, then the Irishman, thank God, has it not, but if it means willingness to join together for the common weal, for the increase of each other's liberties and the protection of each other's rights, then the Irishman is as capable of self-government as any man living.

It would be interesting to compare the artistic and literary histories of Ireland and England. As we mentioned



in hand through the land. The position of the cultivator became daily worse and worse, and the hope of owning his own land receded further and further away. But a group of determined patriots, sent to the English Parliament, devoted themselves to a solution of this problem, and the result was finally the Irish Land Act, under which the natives of the island are at last permitted to buy back their own land on easy terms from those who stole it from them. As benevolent assimilation goes, this is really not so bad. The benevolence usually keeps the assimilated permanently out of his inheritance. The Irish Land Act is the evidence of the development of civilization and humanity in England.

But there remains yet the supreme right, without which all others are incomplete and unsatisfactory—the right of self-government—Home Rule for Ireland! Ireland has demanded it for more than a century. The greatest minds of England have seen not only its justice, but its inevitability, for thirty years. William Gladstone was a long time coming round to it; but as the "Grand Old Man" grew in years and wisdom he finally saw its necessity. John Morley, perhaps the most brilliantly intellectual statesman England now possesses, followed the lead of his master—Gladstone. The Liberal Party today, under the leadership of Premier Asquith, is demanding Home Rule for Ireland. And, thanks to the growth of the liberal spirit and the education of England at the hands of our Irish leaders, this demand does not seem so likely to break up the party as it did thirty years ago. People are growing more consistent—even politicians. The Liberal Party at this hour stands for the reform of the House of Lords and the amendment of the British Constitution in the direction of greater and more complete democracy.

before, Irish monks were fanning into life the flickering flame of art when all the rest of Europe, and especially England, was enveloped in darkness. In music Irish bards have written the tunes which haunt the ears with their joy and their melancholy. England has not had a composer worthy of mention since Henry Purcell in the seventeenth century. To be sure, she claims Sir Arthur Sullivan, an Irishman of the Irish. In literature what can England produce as the peer of the vitriolic Dean Swift, the keen, stately Edmund Burke, the sad and mournful Tom More, the brilliant Richard Brinsley Sheridan? Ireland is so full of poetry that it runs over the edges. The United States got John Boyle O'Reilly; while we here in Canada are blessed with the work of Thomas D'Arcy McGee. Erin's sons have been in favor with the muses because they courted them with simplicity and sincerity. As McGee said:

"I'd rather turn one simple verse
True to the Gaelic ear,
Than classic odes I might rehearse
With senates list'ning near."

It must be admitted, however, that this is not the line of argument to offer the English. Poetry to the English is as caviare to the general; it is like the time the French chef was engaged to prepare the squire's wedding breakfast. The guests and the groom came in and found the table heaped high with legumes, rotis, ragouts and dainty confections and pastries. After a scornful sweep of the eye, he called in the chef and ordered: "Take away this damned monkey food and bring me meat and buns." Can Ireland produce the meat and buns of self-government?

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the island enjoyed for a brief

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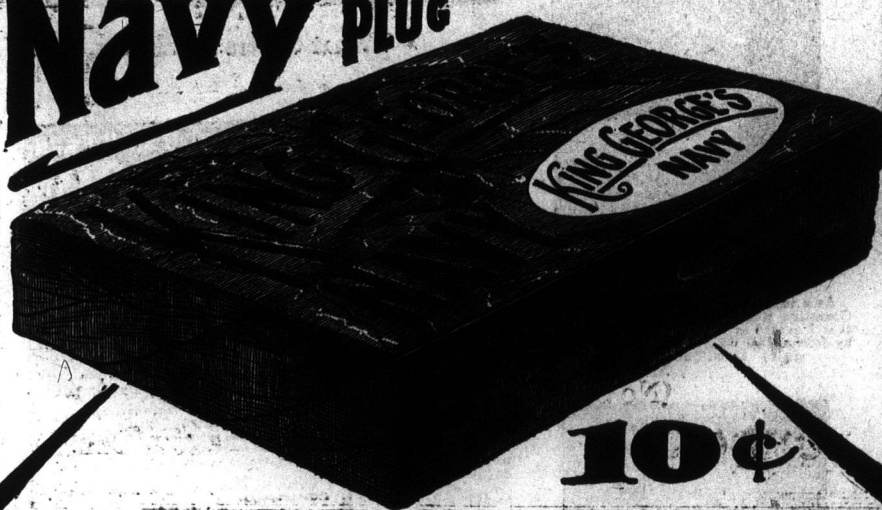
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