The Catholic Register.

"Truth is Catholic; proclaim it ever, and God will protect the rest."—BALMEZ.

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Irish Race Convention of 1896

ANNIVERSARY DINNER GIVEN BY MR. HUGH RYAN

IMPRESSIVE SPEECHES

The Archbishop of Toronto, Hon Edward Blake and Sir Frank Smith state their views regarding the Convention and its Mandate—The Elements of Dissensions Over-estimated—Other Addresses

The banquet given by Mr Hugh Ryan at Hillcrest, Rosedale, in honor of the Archbishop of Toronto Hon Edward Blake, M. P., and the delegates to the Irish Race Convention of 1896 was in every respect a pleasant event; but it was particularly important because of its interest to Irish Canadians and its connection with the national cause. For those reasons THE REGISTER presents a good summary of the speeches delivered, which could not be secured for our last issue. Mr. Ryan's invitations had gone out to all the Canadian and Newfoundland delegates, and before the toast list of the evening had been entered upon he read letters from Very Rev. John Ryan, Newfoundland, Mr. James Ryan Newfoundland, Rev. Dr. Foley, Halifax, N. S., Mr. Gerald B. Tiernan, Halifax, N S., and Lieut. Col. McShane, Halifax, N S., all delegates to the convention. The guests of the evening have already been mentioned.

MR. HUGH RYAN

ON THE CHARACTER AND RESULTS OF THE CONVENTION—THE AUTHOR OF THE IDEA.

The host upon rising to propose the first toast was greeting with "He's a jolly good fellow."

Mr. Ryan said: Your Grace and Gentlemen—The idea suggested itself to my mind some little time ago that it would be a pleasing thing for the Canadian delegates to the Irish Race Convention to meet together to commemorate the great occurrence which took place in Dublin last year, and in which the representatives from Canada acted no unworthy part. Of course we considered our friend Mr. Blake as one of us. I therefore invited them to assemble beneath this humble roof, and I assure you it is with pride and pleasure I see so many of them with us to night. Since then death has removed one of them in the genial, the kind hearted John McKeown. With permission of your Grace I will read a few short sentences from letters received from some, who owing to the distance could not be with us. The convention was in many respects a most remarkable gathering. There were met together men from nearly all parts of the globe, from almost every city and town in the United States and Canada, from Newfoundland to the Pacific ocean, from tardi Africa, from far away Australia, from England and Scotland and from every parish in Ireland. Many of them travelled thousands of miles over land and sea at their own expense, at a great sacrifice of time and absence from their business and their homes; and for what did they make those sacrifices. Certainly for no personal gain or advantage to themselves, but from a most patriotic desire to take part in the convention, which they ardently hoped would result in great good for the cause of Home Rule for Ireland. Many of them had come from countries that have experienced the benefits of home rule. They came to tell the English and Irish people that home rule did not mean the disruption of the British Empire, but that it would make the union of Great Britain and Ireland what it should be, a union based on equal laws and equal rights. I am quite sure the Canadian delegates would be as strongly opposed to the separation of Ireland from the rest of the Empire as the staunchest Tory in England. What they desire for Ireland is only the right to control her own affairs, through her own legislature. We are honored to-night by the presence of the distinguished gentleman who originated the idea of an Irish race convention, who first advocated that a meeting of Irishmen or descendants of Irishmen all over the world should assemble in the city of Dublin to take council with one another and advise upon the best course to be adopted to secure the inestimable boon of Home Rule for Ireland, which Irishmen everywhere so ardently longed for; and we have also with us, the man for whom our esteem and affection is beyond any words of mine, Hon. Edward Blake (applause). The great object of the convention was to devise some way to heal the unhappy differences existing among the leaders of the Irish people, differences which were hailed with joy and satisfaction by their enemies, but which pained and humiliated every friend of Ireland the world over. But, I must be candid and say that I have risen to propose a toast. Gentlemen I believe there is not a living man to day who possesses more the respect, the admiration and affection of the Irish people at home and abroad than he whom health I am now about to propose; and could he have heard the cheers of the thousands assembled in that hall in Dublin, at the mention of his name, he would have felt somewhat repaid for the anxiety, the worry and labor he had undergone for the cause of Home Rule. And he will be known for all time to come as the father of the Irish Race Convention—the great, the illustrious Archbishop of Toronto who so health I now propose (loud applause).

THE ARCHBISHOP OF TORONTO

ELOGY OF HON. EDWARD BLAKE'S CHARACTER AND SERVICES.

The Archbishop of Toronto upon rising was received with loud applause. He thanked the host for the reference made to his connection with the Irish Race Convention, but he could not lay any exclusive claim to the original idea. Their beloved friend, Hon. Edward Blake, had a large share in it; and the letter which he had written to Mr. Blake was the result of a conversations they had held in his (the speaker's) study. It was, indeed, a unique gathering to propose. Never before had men representing the Irish race in the various countries and communities of the earth been asked to assemble for any object. They would all remember the feelings with which they had looked forward to the convention; looking back this evening he could say that the sea-divided Gael could not have sent upon such a mission men better qualified in their representative character as well as by their virtues and political experience to act along with their brothers at home for the healing of the unhappy differences that had arisen among the parliamentary party in Westminster. They had selected for the mission men who were thoroughly representative of a race that he (the speaker) believed to be morally or intellectually inferior to no race on earth. They had seen it stated after the convention closed that it would fail of immediate success because it had not been entirely representative. The Irish in Canada who were not present at the convention knew they had sent men who truly represented them; and he believed that the Irish race, even to the communities most distant from Ireland, was as well and truly represented. It was therefore, he would say a pity that influential men at home did not see their way to take part in the convention. There had been misunderstandings of one kind or another, misunderstandings upon minor points, and misunderstandings between men; but there had not been nor was there now any difference concerning one patriotic principle. He was assured that the convention had a great educational influence upon the Irish people, he had learned that notwithstanding the differences of opinion about the merits of certain leading Irishmen, members of the parliamentary representation, notwithstanding the differences existing among other influential men, the Irish Race Convention did exert a great influence upon the body of the Irish people, and that the Irish people are thoroughly for unity, for order and for discipline in the national party to-day (applause.) He had been assured of that in various parts of the country where he had visited; he had been assured that the convention had done a great and solid good for Ireland. They were all glad to-night to have with them their distinguished and beloved fellow-citizen, Hon Edward Blake (applause.) He (the Archbishop) was glad indeed to meet at the hospitable board of Mr. Hugh Ryan the man for whom, among the prime men of to-day, every Irish Canadian kept the warmest place in his heart. He would now propose a toast which he was sure they would receive with enthusiasm—the health of Hon. Edward Blake (applause.) It was a delicate matter to speak in praise of any man in the presence of him who is the object of the praise. It was still more delicate and difficult to speak any words, praise of a gentleman whose modesty is as great as his worth and his merits, which was saying a great deal. But Mr. Blake's light had shone so long and so steadily before their eyes in Canada that praise must be spoken in his behalf, in spite of any delicacy. Whether dwelling among them or dwelling on the other side of the Atlantic, they knew his unwavering steadfastness, and they knew best of all the disinterestedness and generosity with which he devoted his talents and his loyal courage to every effort for Ireland and for his brothers of the Irish race. They knew the purity of his life and they were not surprised at the greatness of any sacrifice he was capable of making. No man could be regarded with more genuine admiration by Irish Canadians. Nor could they imagine that the Irish people would fail to share their affection for so great a man. He left a happy home in Canada: he broke the ties of family and friendship, he gave up the emoluments of a lucrative profession for them and for the sacred cause of their country. They had watched him with unflagging interest every year since he left them, they saw that every year called upon him to make new sacrifices for the down trodden people of the old land. Let men of selfish minds differ, let factionists shrug the shoulder a high and patriotic motive; but thank God they had sent into the service of Ireland a man of the Irish race to whom no self interest ever appealed and whose pure motives nothing could sway. The man they had given to Ireland had consecrated all his talents and his life to her cause, a cause as sacred as humanity justice or human liberty. The career of their honorable friend in the House of Commons was known to them. But he would relate an incident in connection with his recent visit to Ireland which he thought would interest them. He was speaking with a distinguished member of Parliament, and reference was made to Mr Blake's great speech upon the financial burdens of Ireland. They could imagine the pleasure with which he heard a distinguished man say that that speech would live in the history of the debates of the House of Commons, for the impression it had made, for the labor of research and the mastery of detail that it revealed, and for the force and brilliancy of the language employed, as the equal of anything ever heard from the lips of Edmund Burke (applause). Could they, meeting with their friend only to part with him again in a few days, doubt that his brilliant and most disinterested services would be remembered with gratitude by the Irish people? They could never imagine an Irishman capable of ingratitude, they could not imagine the Irish people insensible to the character and to the work of a man whose talents brightened the present page of their country's history. They were glad to have him amongst them, they heartily welcomed him to his native city; but they would give him back to Ireland because they realized the value of his service to their country. He proposed Mr. Blake's health, which was drunk with enthusiasm.

HON. EDWARD BLAKE

ON THE PROGRAMME OF NEXT SESSION—IRISH UNITY AND THE IRISH ABROAD.

Hon. Edward Blake, in response, thanked the Archbishop, the host, and all the friends who surrounded him for their warm kindness. He would only say this for himself, that whatever he had done it was his first wish, as well as his duty, to move forward in the Irish cause. His colleagues and himself had had difficulties and disadvantages to contend against; but, in spite of these, they had accomplished not a little in the last few years. He had rejoiced in anticipation of the present gathering, for he was greatly delighted to have the opportunity of meeting again his Canadian friends who were present at the great and historic convention of last year. The convention was a most important step in the Irish cause. It had been their own fault no doubt that the cause at that time demanded the calling of the convention. But he thought that some excuse were to be found for those who had been engaged for a longer period than was common fighting against an enormous majority, greater than had ever been known before in the House of Commons. And since the convention, although the spirit which his Grace had alluded to was to some extent entertained, there was a most decided feeling among the masses of Irish people altogether and wholly in favor of unity. (Applause.) He did not say that there were no exceptions. Of course there were exceptions. But withal there was a certain unanimity of sentiment among the people, a certain harmony of feeling in favor of complete unity. This should be known throughout the world, and it was being more and more expressed in Ireland, notwithstanding those differences affecting persons and personal feelings, which must to some extent be entertained under any and all circumstances. But their thought and action now must be of the present. The unnatural conditions that had arisen in Ireland, and that had called for the holding of the convention, had, he feared, imparted to Irishmen a feeling approaching—he would not say despair—but apathy, on account of differences having survived the convention and disappearing more slowly than ardent friends of Ireland abroad had confidently hoped for. He asked them to consider that such apathy was a very serious obstacle to the attainment of the complete unity they hoped soon to see, because it gave just such an opportunity as any one who wished to delay the cause of the Irish race would most desire. The differences existing in Ireland would entirely disappear; and in saying this he should add that he would be sorry to see a single man eliminated from the Irish service, although things had now come to the stage where but three or four men at the most stood in the way of the complete reunion of forces. He knew that the men to whom he was speaking were too much devoted to Ireland and too thoroughly acquainted with the political conditions existing on the other side of the water not to estimate correctly the effect of such a feeling. They knew that it was not possible for a cause like Ireland's to meet with more than a temporary reverse. The Irish Nationalist representatives had felt that their difficulties of the last few years had almost paralyzed their forces. And at the present time the conditions surrounding them were not all at they could wish. In parliament there was a great majority against Home Rule. The Liberal party too, which has generally remained friendly to Ireland through all the fight, is much more demoralized and disorganized than the Irish party. Not merely difficulties arising from personal influences and animosities are being felt in the Liberal party; but serious differences upon points of opinion exist, which are not one difference over a matter of principle or serious opinion either between the parliamentary representatives or among the people islands in the way of the Irish cause. There is in reality no excuse for separation or coolness. What is more, while in England questions are all the time coming up to cause more or less variation in the complexion of the electorate the principle and purpose of Irish electors never change. The attitude of the people towards the cause of their country remains the same. They agree too upon all the important points of action, they aim at the same objective point and make for it by the same route. So that neither in fact nor for any reason, is there any difference of opinion among the masses of the Irish people, which shows that there is no excuse for separation or coolness, and no foundation for any such differences of opinion as exist in the labour party of England to day. But the Irish National party have to keep up the fight. They know that the next session is to be an Irish session; the great debates in the House of Commons and throughout the country are to be upon Irish matters. The Irish representatives had defeated the first declared intention of the Government respecting the programme of the coming session and compelled the introduction of important matters, which would afford the opportunity of discussing the burdens of Ireland in connection with imperial taxation. Another measure was an Irish local government bill. They must regard these as large and important measures. On the first there is bound to take place very considerable discussion; but it was his (Mr Blake's) opinion that the bill for Irish local county government must prove a boon to the Irish people when licked into proper shape by the Irish party in Westminster. The measure must give this great and immediate opportunity to the Irish people, that from among there own ranks they can bring forward men of mark and strength in the local constituencies, the result of which cannot fail to put an end to the systematic misgoverning of the Irish, who though admittedly fit to govern in every part of the world, are told by a class of Englishmen that they are unfitted to govern themselves. The coming measure would at all events give to Ireland the machinery and the opportunity of proving the utter falsity of all that and when the Irish people receive the control of their local affairs, and bring forward men from their own class they will demonstrate to Englishmen who have received this false impression that they are equally fit for a Home Rule in Ireland as in England, Canada or elsewhere. In the interval it is most important that the great body of the Irish people who are waiting unitedly for this opportunity and the advantage it must bring to the national cause, should have the continued encouragement and sympathy of the Irish people abroad. This encouragement seemed to him (Mr Blake) indeed an essential element; and he wanted on his return to Ireland to be able to assure his friends of the support of Canada. The Convention had been a great fact; it had given the Irish cause and the Irish party a new starting point. But the starting point is not the place to pause; they must move forward from the new starting point of the Convention, and not only aim at the completion of unity among the Irish party, but bear the banner of the Irish cause along. Irishmen abroad and their sympathizers in every part of the world have given their encouragement and support to the cause of unity. They had endorsed the action of the Irish national party in the manifesto addressed to the Irish people after the Convention; they had endorsed the principle of majority rule, and that endorsation he could assure them had had a great effect in Ireland. The Irish Party had acted strictly upon the verdict of the convention, laying down regulations that simply indicate the essential duty of all the members of the party. The Irish people are united and the next general election will show their undiminished faith and firmness in the demand for Home Rule. On the other hand there are signs of another change in England and the Irish party must be prepared. In his (Mr. Blake's) opinion it was essential for the Irish people abroad to act upon and follow up the Convention manifesto. In other words they cannot pause; they must go on. (Loud applause)

HON. G. W. ROSS.

THE CANADIAN STANDPOINT OF THE HOME RULE CAUSE—SCOTLAND'S FIDELITY.

Rev. F. Ryan proposed the health of Hon. G. W. Ross, which was cordially honored.

The Minister of Education acknowledging the toast paid an eloquent tribute to the Hon. Edward Blake. He spoke of the loving respect in which he is held by the whole Canadian people. Referring to Home Rule he said he could not understand how any Canadian subjecting the blessings of self government, especially any Canadian believer in the new imperialism could be otherwise than a sympathizer with the demand for Irish self government, essential as it was not only to the contentment of Ireland but also to the strength of the British empire. He spoke of the sympathy of Scotland, rejoicing that his fellow countrymen had from the first endorsed Ireland's demand for self government.

SIR FRANK SMITH.

THE IRISH CLERGY. APPARENT INDIFFERENCE OF SOME TO THE PRINCIPLE OF THE CONVENTION.

Sir Frank Smith rose to propose a toast. He said: Your Grace and gentlemen, I ask you to drink the health of the delegates who were well represented Canada at the Irish Race Convention a year ago. Now in my life have I proposed a toast with a feeling such as I now entertain and am prepared to express. I regret that our host has not called upon someone better qualified to do justice to the toast that has brought us together to night. There is some thing to be said of the men who attended the Irish Convention from the most distant parts world which requires care in the saying, as well as exact knowledge of all the facts, and gentlemen if any thing I say to night shall appear to you in the lightest degree unjust I beg of you to attribute it to my great respect for the foreign delegates at the convention, to my appreciation of the personal sacrifices that many of them as I am well aware made, and to want of personal knowledge on my part of their reception in Dublin. You are all aware how the proposal of the Convention came about. The idea was to hold a gathering representative of the Irish race in the interests of the Irish cause; and although that gathering might have been held elsewhere than in Dublin the Irish capital was proposed at the start and the proposal seemed to meet with universal favor. I was one of the Canadian delegates selected and I had agreed to go, feeling I assure you that the choice was the highest honor ever conferred upon me. In common with every Irishman in Canada, I am sure, I trusted to the wisdom of the Archbishop who had proposed the convention; but as the time drew near I noticed that all classes of Irishmen at home did not share the same view of the convention as we here in Canada and as Irishmen in other parts of the world. We Canadians are Home Rulers, not simply because we believe in and love Ireland, although that is our first and highest principle; but our belief in Canada and in the British empire has also something to do with our unfailing support of the cause of Irish self government. Irishmen in Ireland look forward to the pacification of their own country in the success of the Home Rule cause; our view is necessarily wider. We love the old country, we love our own too, and we also see that the beneficial results of Home Rule would apply to the empire. So that on both sides of the Atlantic a common and identical view of the significance of the Irish cause cannot be expected from all Irishmen and all friends of Home Rule. But, I think we had right to expect an identical view of the spirit and aim of the great convention. The Irish race abroad was represented as we all expected it would be; but how were the representatives of that race from abroad received in Ireland? They came as friends from the ends of the earth, and I believe were welcomed as brothers by the Irish people. But gentlemen—and if I am wrong you will correct me—it has been stated by the opponents of the convention that many of the clergy of Ireland were not represented as they should have been. They had the opportunity of their lives, the blessing of the Pope, the eloquence of one of the noblest of their hierarchy; but some of them, as we were told, by the opponents of the convention, stayed away and the convention did not bring about the happy results anticipated for it. In noticing such allegations against some of the clergy by the opponents of the convention I may have gone too far. At all events you understand my feelings in the matter. But the honor due to the men of the convention, and to none in a greater degree than our Canadian delegates, is all the greater for the unexpected neglect of others. I ask you to drink their health.

FATHER RYAN'S SPEECH.

AN EXPLANATION OF THE POSITION OF THE IRISH CLERGY.

The toast having been honored, Father Frank Ryan, rector of St. Michael's Cathedral, rose to respond for the delegates. He knew, he said, that Sir Frank Smith spoke from an honest, but it was extremely difficult for one to put on the spot at the instant the true attitude of the Irish clergy towards the convention. In the first place, he believed that five hundred, amongst them the leading priests of Ireland, might be considered a fair representation of the Irish clergy. The gifted Bishop O Donnell of Raphoe was a splendid representative of the Irish hierarchy and the Irish race; but he desired to say, on behalf of the Canadian delegates, that they did not go to meet the Irish clergy specially. They went inspired by a principle the adoption of which he believed at that time was essential to the success of one of the great moral questions of right occupying the attention of men's minds at the close of the 19th century—the right of Irish Home Rule. (Applause.) That was a principle as sacred as the cause of humanity, and they were not surprised to find that it had the blessing of the Pope at the convention and the eloquent and active advocacy of Bishop O Donnell and at least five hundred of the Irish clergy. Even if the remarks made by Sir Frank Smith applied to every other bishop and priest in Ireland—and think God they did not—and even if the great majority of the Irish priests were indifferent to the convention, it only showed how priests may differ on a political question. Still he could assure Sir Frank that he had greatly overestimated the indifference of the Irish clergy. (Applause.)

DEAN HARRIS.

THE CANADIAN DELEGATES WERE SATISFIED AND PLEASED WITH THEIR RECEPTION.

Dean Harris next proposed [illegible] in a glowing tribute to the Lord Bishop of Raphoe. He agreed that it was a very wise move on the part of the Irish clergy that the Canadian delegates were more than satisfied in fact were highly gratified by the reception they had met. He explained that it was entirely by choice and decision on their part beforehand that the foreign delegates did not meet with the representatives of any section of Irish politics before the opening of the convention and this fact accounted for the absence of any sort of formal welcome, even though the delegates expressed it which they did not. He was proud to have his name associated with the convention than of any other public incident of his life and he knew that his brother delegates shared the same feeling.

OTHER SPEECHES

CANADIAN OBSERVER DELEGATES—A TRIBUTE TO THE CLERGY.

Short speeches by Father P. F O'Donnell Montreal and Mr. James J Foy, Q C both of whom said that if the Canadian delegates and others did not meet with the reception in Dublin that their friends here seem to have expected it was because the delegates went to attend the convention and not meet with the friends of any particular party. They could never forget their reception at the convention. Chevalier Heney, Father Frank O Reilly, of Hamilton (who spoke with pleasant recollection of the incidents of the convention and the reception of the Hamilton resolutions) Rev. Dr. Flannery, of St. Thomas and Mr. P. F. Cronin followed.

Dean Harris asked the company to drink to the elected Canadian delegates whom one circumstance or another had prevented from attending the convention.

Rev. Dr. Burns of Hamilton responded eloquently, addressing himself as a Protestant, to a refutation of the so widely credited calumny that the working out of Home Rule in Ireland would be regretted by the minority of his faith. That, he said, was false, and only old observers like himself know how false it was. If all men were capable of learning truth from the facts of history, the history of Ireland must dissolve their minds of this form of religious prejudice, which was in his opinion the greatest barrier in the way of Ireland's happiness. He mentioned the affection of Canadians, Catholics and Protestants, for Edward Blake; and he hoped to see the ranks of the Irish Protestant Home Rulers increasing by the influence of such men as they had given to the service of Ireland. (Applause.)

Mr. Thomas Long spoke of the loss of Edward Blake to Canada. Canadians of all parties realized his sterling patriotism and none more so than Irish Catholics, who regarded him as their own. If Edward Blake had not joined the Irish party he would to-day be Canadian Premier. He had more faith in his countrymen at home than to believe they would permit any leader of faction so long them to attack a man who had sacrificed home, position and wealth in their service. Edward Blake would continue to fight the battle of Ireland, giving not only his talents without return and his money without regret, but holding also on the side of Ireland's cause the influence of his honored name. The influence of Canada went with Edward Blake's personality. (Applause.)

Mr Barry Hayes said that the vitality of the Irish cause was attested by the fact that in Canada its principles were the same to-day as in his early manhood. He quoted some interesting extracts from old newspapers to this effect.

Dean Harris proposed the health of Mr. Robert Jaffray of The Globe directorate. The Dean said he had no politics himself; at least none that upon analysis could be described as Liberal or Conservative. But he entertained a great respect for The Globe for the unfailing support it has given to the cause of Irish Home Rule. (Applause).

Mr. Jaffray replying said The Globe had done all that Dean Harris had said, because its policy was the policy of British freedom and British unity, and because it believed in opposing the religious prejudice that stands between the Imperial government and the concession of self government to Ireland. He firmly believed that but for the unhappy party raised by a certain element of Irish Protestants the Irish question would long ago have been settled. He agreed with Dr. Burns that the concession of this right to Ireland was necessary to the realization of imperial unity.

Other toasts and speeches followed.

Sunday in the Cathedral.

Last Sunday being the solemnity of the dedication of St. Michael the Archangel, special services were held at St. Michael's Cathedral, it being the titular feast of the church. Solemn High Mass was celebrated by the Rev. Father Ryan, who was assisted by Rev. Father Tracey, deacon, and Mr A Donahoe, sub-deacon. His Grace the Archbishop, who was present for the first time after his visit to the old land was assisted at the throne by the Rev Dr. Pedy of St. Michael's College. After the Gospel was sung, his Grace ascended the pulpit and preached an able, vigorous and eloquent discourse on the devotion of the Holy Rosary, which was most attentively listened to by a large congregation, who had specially attended to welcome the presence of the chief pastor in their midst. It is a pleasure to be able to state that the health of his Grace was very much improved by his sojourn abroad, while his voice is as vigorous and as resonant as it was in the days of old.