

During the session of 1888 he did not even occupy his seat in the House, and during that of 1889, though present occasionally, he took absolutely no part in the discussions. In that of 1890, being somewhat restored in health, he took a more active part, but when the general election came on in 1891 he did not offer himself in his old constituency. He wrote a letter, however, which was the sensation of the day, but which is so recent in the public mind that it need not be alluded to further here.

His famous letter was like a farewell to public life. It cast the ranks of his friends into confusion and although it contained the most scathing condemnation of the policy of their foes yet it was published with delight and clapping of hands by all the Conservative newspapers of the country and has even been repeated at intervals when a political crisis of any kind was on hand. A section of his party was very wrathful, and was not slow to express its opinions. Nevertheless scarcely had the house assembled before the inconsistency of his absence from that assembly was felt. This inconsistency became accentuated when rumors reached the public ears that his health was restored and that with its return he was spoiling to mingle again in the glorious fray. Some of the leading reform newspapers began to call for his return to parliament. Just while this call was increasing in volume this last remarkable summons from the leaders of the National party in Ireland was received.

His interest in Ireland is not a matter of yesterday. As might be inferred from the earlier statements in this sketch it is scarcely wonderful that the descendant of the men who denounced the effacement of the Irish parliament at the beginning of the century should at least have a sentimental interest in seeing it re-established towards its close. But he has shown more than a sentimental interest. Just when his interest became

crystallized into opinion there is no record, but we know that in a speech in Parliament in 1880 he expressed the hope and belief that when Mr. Gladstone attained power in England Home Rule would be granted to Ireland. In 1882 Hon. John Costigan introduced a resolution expressing the sympathy of Canada with Ireland in her struggle for Home Rule. Mr. Blake while not approving entirely the wording of the resolution and making suggestions for changes was yet prepared to vote for it and did so. His speech on that occasion showed that the subject was no new one to him. He took up the history of Ireland and its present condition, which he declared to be the disgrace and humiliation of Great Britain. He does not conceal his admiration for Gladstone, but at the same time in that 1882 speech he criticised keenly the eloquent Englishman's attitude on the question at that time. Mr. Gladstone was then in a procrastinating mood. Though not denying the need of a remedy for Ireland's ills, he yet saw so many lions in the path that he was indisposed to devise a remedy, or apply it if devised. Mr. Blake unsparingly exposed the unsoundness of this position. Two sentences in that speech ring curiously to-day when he has left our shores to take part in the settlement of the Irish question. He said, "This is a practical question. I do not expect to be called upon to deal with it." Time's revolutions have brought him round to deal with it practically.

In 1886 he himself introduced a set of resolutions on the Irish question to the notice of parliament. The history of those resolutions was not creditable to some gentlemen who pose as lovers of Ireland. There was a great terror on the part of the Conservatives lest the Reform minority in parliament should reap some political advantage from Mr. Blake's powerful advocacy of Home Rule. What should have been the feelings of men who were sincerely desirous of furthering the