

## COLLEGE GREEN.

## THE OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE.

Now the Bank of Ireland—Reminiscences of the Men and Days when that Structure Was the Scene of Great Debate.

In the drive to the hotel, as on former drives, I could not discover a single memorial tablet telling of the residence at one time or another of the many great men who had spent their early lives in Dublin. The world rings with their fame, and many a commemorative tablet in far foreign lands arrests the traveller's attention, but the city of their birth has forgotten them and her citizens know nothing of the haunts of genius. With the single exception of Dean Swift, not the Dean as he was, but a straw man, one of the Irish myths, there is nothing known of Ireland's illustrious dead by the average Dubliner. You will ask in vain where young Burke lived, where Goldsmith dined, or, to come to later times, where the real founders of New Ireland, two Trinity undergraduates, and a wild-eyed young journalist, started the Nation. The name of the streets are un-*Irish*. A few years ago an attempt was made to change Sackville street into O'Connell street. The attempt was a failure. In the future, when the dead city comes to life under a distinctively national parliament, and new streets are mapped out, we may expect that their sponsors will not forget the names of Emmet, Grattan, Curran, etc. As we passed College Green, I saw through a large window a great number of men young and old, comely and otherwise, some with pens in their hands, others with pens behind their ears, sitting or leaning against huge oaken counters. Their faces wore a grave air, and their motions like a series of automatic figures were dignified in the extreme. The building that housed them was a noble specimen of Irish enterprise. It covers an area of five acres, and with its strange, sad history, makes it by far the most memorable structure in Dublin. The name of the architect whose genius planned it, like that of the Cathedral of Cologne has been forgotten. Peace to his ashes, he had a great soul for the country, and time he lived in. The building is called the Bank of Ireland, and was formerly the House of Parliament. The bank directors if they have to vacate as they will soon by command of their old foe Gladstone, to more modest quarters will not leave the building as they found it. The fine hall for hearers was by these asinine men torn down and converted into a cash room. Had there been a spark of patriotism or beauty in their little souls this act of vandalism could not have taken place. Of that noble pile, once the home of eloquence, there only remains the House of Lords in its original condition.

Where Grattan stood and denounced the union, where Flood poured out his sarcasm, where the hypocrite Plunket was convincingly eloquent is but a matter of conjecture. No sooner had it passed into the hands of the banking fraternity, than they made up their minds that the work of consolidation done by Castlereagh was perfect and fit for all time. What use then for a House of Parliament? They had no love for Irish patriotism and they were not going to have a museum in Dublin to keep that monster alive. So with crowbars and other instruments indigenous to the island, they destroyed what should have been sacred to the Nation, and made of the nursery of genius a home for five per cents and reeking mediocrity. How finely has Burns said

The best laid schemes of mice and men,  
Gang aft' agley,  
And lea'e us nought but grief and pain  
For promised joys.

The want of foresight in these bankers might be forgiven. Human ken is but very limited at best. Prophets now-a-days are scarce, and without their inspired aid it could not have been known that the "young man of unblemished character, and of distinguished parliamentary talents, rising hope of those stern and unbending Tories," should write, in the year 1886, this paragraph: "So, then, we may fairly say of the policy which aims at giving Ireland an Irish Government, not only is it a policy broad, open, trustful, popular, and, therefore, liberal, but also is a policy which, instead of innovating restores; which builds upon the ancient foundations of Irish history and tradition; which, by making power local, makes it congenial,

where hitherto it has been unfamiliar, almost alien; and strong, where hitherto it has been weak." To the Bank of Ireland this paragraph can have but one meaning—a notice to quit—and that in the near future. Let us hope that in the sweeping out of the House of Parliament ever cobweb that might well up a memory of the old House before the Union will be swept down and thrown into the Liffey. It is a common thing on both sides of the Atlantic for demagogues, totally ignorant of Irish history, to make pathetic allusions to the Old Parliament in College Green. Some Irish writers pretend to weep when they touch upon its glories. I have little respect for Irish writers of history in Ireland and none for the merry convivial crew who write on this side of the Atlantic. They write with one design—to capture dollars from the uneducated Irishmen and Irish women who toil and moid their lives away in a strange land for a scanty pittance. Such history is a curious compound of myth, bigotry and prejudice. What Jeffrey said of Irish history is true even on our own day. "A good history of Ireland is still a desideratum in our language:—and would not only be interesting we think but invaluable." From numerous authentic family documents however, we can have an adequate picture of Ireland's last parliament. For corruption, bribery of the most audacious kind, ignorance and intolerance we may search history in vain for its equal. To those who have cheered that jolly band of orators, whose ignorance couched in bad English is one of the features of the festivities of the 17th of March, it should be sufficient to point out that the Penal-laws were in full force and vigor under this parliament, and that Ireland under her present form of government has a thousand times more representation than she ever had at College Green. It was not by genius nor by crafty statesmanship that Castlereagh forced the union. The most prosaic mind could have done so, provided his purse was filled with guineas, and his hand was lavish in bestowing them. The majority of the members were drunken rowdies, who has no thought of their country's good. Their days were spent in low grogeries, drinking and gambling, their nights were given to legislation. If it smelt of Irish-toddy and was a mandarin piece of work the people had quietly to swallow it. Caesar was not equal to an Irish M. P. as a dictator. He horse-whipped a peasant and then passed a bill to send him to Botany Bay for complaining. There was the most despicable kinds of taxation, and not a whit of representation. The majority of the people were outlawed disfranchised and faith-persecuted Catholic clergymen were hunted down with the same mercy they gave a pack of wolves. Protestants of honor and truth were shamefully put to death for passing censure on the corrupt legislation that came from College-Green. "The Irish-Parliament was notoriously corrupt and notoriously ignorant" writes Dunlop. Of the members he writes, "blind to every interest except their own; tenacious of their own privileges; the leaders of a noisy and intolerant faction they resisted every moderate scheme of reform." One can scarcely feel surprized at the Union, when the character of the ordinary member of those days is clearly

drawn. "That a majority of the Irish Parliament was obtained for the Union by purchase, by places, pensions, peerages, and compensation for suppressed seats, there is not the slightest doubt" writes a unionist-historian. It was the first time in history that the prerogatives of a nation were publicly sold. Lawless tells us that these men "preferred the government of a desert, to that of a happy contented people; and the constitution in church and state was pronounced secure against its enemies, when the people of Ireland were stripped of every privilege and every right which separates humanity from the brute creation." Another witness tells us that "private manners were debauched, public sentiment debased, and every faculty of the mind enervated." Such was the ill-fated country, governed from College Green. Castlereagh, one of its members, "undistinguished," as Barrington remarks, although he had been prior to his treachery a member of seven years' standing, found it an easy matter to rob his country of her independence. He may shudder at the means, but who will gainsay that he knew his men. "History, tradition, or the fiction of romance contain no instance of any minister who so fearlessly deviated from all the principles which ought to characterize the servant of a constitutional monarch, or the citizen of a free country." No Irishman that has a gleam of sense will wish such a parliament to be resuscitated. In truth, no human effort could do so. Men have grown wise since the days of Castlereagh, and governments more chary of guining constitutional privileges by bribery. From the close of that farce called an Irish Parliament, from which a majority of the people, and that the natives were excluded by cause of their religion down to our own day, some of the greatest and most beneficial reforms have been enacted. The power of the Crown has passed into that of the people. Classes are disappearing, an education, enabling the masses to have an intelligent say in the government of their respective countries. The press, the most powerful weapon of modern times, stands as a menace to governments encroaching on the people's liberties. It is not to be thought of that the people of Ireland, during this long period of reforms in Europe have been idle spectators. Even their enemies admit that in politics they are apt pupils. It may be taken for granted that their earnest men in their patient waiting have learned from those reforms, and wisely noted the benefits that have accrued from them, in order to apply them to their own land. The Union has signally failed. The professed object was to unite in strong bonds of love the islands. No writer—not even Froude in his historical romance—will admit that this object has been attained. What can be done for poor Ireland? used to be the yearly cry of British statesmen. Some answered a tenant right-bill, more Coercion. Both have signally failed. As Moses of old led the Israelites from darkness and bondage, so does Mr. Gladstone propose to dispel the darkness from England, the bondage from Ireland. His scheme is the only one feasible. Tersely put, it amounts to this. Bank of Ireland and its army of dullards removed to some less pretentious building, a real live 19th

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century parliament established in College-Green, and the affairs of Ireland conducted by her own people. Taxation to mean representation, and representatives to be neither Parnellites nor McCarthyites, but honest sensible Irishmen who will calmly deliberate what is best for their country. This scheme will chase away that hydra mouthed monster the Irish question, that poor Hood found necessary to warn his subscribers that he knew nothing of its existence. It will ease the weary brain of many a journalist. It will cure the insomnia of Goldwin Smith, James A. Froude, Edward Dicey and T. W. Russell. It will allow the Times to reduce its size, and become less sensational. It will kill Irish-oratory in America and end the reign of 100,000 sweet singers of Ireland. It will save the virtuous, sensitive daughter of Erin many a hard earned dollar. The itinerant patriot will become a rarity, and leeches valued a trifle. The dripping wound will have been healed and bandages, medicines, doctors sent about their business. For such blessings let us Americans chaunt "Te Deum," the New Ireland will sing the "Amen."

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