

SONNET—"THE NODDING VIOLET."

"And from her fair and unpolluted flesh,
May violets spring."—*Hamlet*.

Blossoms of blue, on slender stems down bent,
Peeping from gnarled root and grassy bed,
Whose loveliness allures the careless tread
Of child and poet, when in heart's content
They leave life's misery and merriment
To muse alone with Nature. It is said
That from the sainted graves of maidens dead
Ye rise as type of true-love innocent.

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On this lone mound of her now sadly laid
To rest within the fold of mother earth,
May violets spring to testify her worth,
Who was by Fortune cruelly betrayed;
And, as each year is robed with new and rich delight,
Be ye her constant witnesses in all men's sight.

E. G. GARTHWAITE.

ELECTION NOTES.

THE writer of this is somewhat in the position in which one who in the council of war had voted against fighting finds himself when the battle has been fought and won. He dreaded and deprecated the conflict. At that time it was very doubtful whether there would be a majority in the House of Commons against the second reading of the Bill. Still more doubtful was the result of the general election by which the defeat of the Bill would be followed. The country had been taken by surprise. The people were very ill-informed as to the question. Large masses of them were totally ignorant, and were untrained in the use of the political power which had been recently thrust upon them. But whatever might be the immediate result either of the division or of the election, it was certain that by the division, and still more by the election, one great party in the State would be fatally committed to a policy of Separation, which, apart from the influence of the leader, had, as Mr. Bright says, not twenty sincere supporters in the House outside the Irish party, and had scarcely any genuine support among the people. To treat the Bill as dead and decline to discuss it further or vote upon it, when its author had announced that he would not go into committee and had pledged himself to prorogue and not adjourn, was a policy which obviously had its weak side, and which would have left the Separatist Government in power, but which, by allowing everybody to remain uncommitted, would have averted a great evil. The Bill when brought up again in its new form, with the Irish members admitted on reserved subjects, would have been just as absurd and impracticable as it was in the old form, and would have been as easily defeated. Besides which the country would have had the chance of "a long coveted repose." Mr. Gladstone's personal ascendancy being evidently the chief danger, there was great hope in delay.

But the signal for battle once given, there could be no hesitation in the mind of a Unionist. The man who does not perceive that an Irish Parliament means separation by an angry and lingering process must be a great genius, or very much the reverse. An Englishman by birth cannot wish to see his native country dismembered, and dismembered by the hands of foreign conspirators. A Canadian cannot wish to see the centre of his civilization ruined, and the flag of his race furred in shame. Even a citizen of the world, as I think, cannot wish to see the power of Great Britain wrecked, her influence annulled, and her light put out among the nations. The universal acclaim of all the enemies of England, both in Europe and in America, which greeted Mr. Gladstone's proposal, was a sufficient warning to a loyal Englishman. I knew enough of Irish history to compare the treatment and condition of Ireland before the Union, with her treatment and her condition since the Union, and to estimate at its true value the incendiary or mercenary tale of Irish wrongs. I knew enough of Irish character on both sides of the Atlantic to be sure that its political faults were its own and not the effect of British connection. I knew enough of Irish rule in American cities to judge what sort of blessing an Irish Parliament and Government would be to Ireland, especially when it was pretty certain that as soon as this grand fund of patronage and pelf had been provided Irish-American adventurers would be flocking back to this side of the Atlantic. Coming from Canada, where we had Fenianism close at hand, and had been twice invaded by its piratical but farcical hordes, I could not fail to be specially impressed both with the foreign character of the conspiracy and with its despicable weakness, or to feel that to surrender to it would be the very depth of national ignominy.

As to the conduct of the Prime Minister, I could not have any more doubt than I had as to the issue which he had raised. Long and zealously, though not wholly without misgiving, I had followed him. But a change seemed to have come over his character. Popularity visited him late in life, and it appears to have been too much for him. He had avowed in effect his conviction that there was nothing that an Irish Parliament could do for Ireland which the United Parliament could not do better for her. He had himself announced to an applauding crowd at the Guildhall the arrest of Mr. Parnell. He had denounced Mr. Parnell as marching through rapine to the dismemberment of the Empire. He had taunted the Tory Government with its Parnellite alliance. He had called for a majority to enable him to resist the pressure and the clamour of the

Nationalists. Failing to obtain that majority he had at once flung himself into the arms of Mr. Parnell, and accepted power as his gift. I do not scrutinize motives, but I point to actions. The aspect of this action was rendered more suspicious by the mode of performance, by the floating of the scheme of surrender through a domestic Mercury, the equivocal disclaimer, the sinister signalling to the Parnellites, and the indirect way in which Lord Salisbury's Government was overthrown, by supporting the amendment of Mr. Jesse Collings, which having served its turn is flouted with its framer. As to the proffer of support to Lord Salisbury in settling the Irish question, it was evidently little better than a ruse. Peel changed, but Peel avowed his change and paid his tribute to public morality; nor did he fling himself out of the cabinet of Lord Liverpool into the arms of O'Connell. It has been alleged in defence of Mr. Gladstone's inconsistency that he showed an inclination to Home Rule when he extended the suffrage in Ireland. But to say that he meant in extending the Irish suffrage to throw the game into the hands of the Nationalists, and then to coalesce with them for the settlement of the Irish question, would be to bring against his integrity and patriotism a far more grievous charge than the bitterest of his opponents has yet brought.

Bidden by an Association of Canadian friends of the Union to do anything in my power for the cause, I put myself at the disposal of the Liberal Unionist Committee, and by it was employed as an old English Liberal in inducing Liberal Unionists to be true to the patriotic alliance and give their votes to Conservatives. There was difficulty in this, as there was in inducing Conservatives to vote for Liberals. To abstain, an ordinary Liberal, if he was a Unionist, was willing, but not to vote with the Blues, when he had all his life voted with the Yellows. It was not to be expected that the masses would at once comprehend an extraordinary situation and understand that this was not an election but a national vote on the question of the Union. The result varied with local circumstances and the characters of candidates: some seceders had a more difficult pill to swallow than others. In four places out of five which I visited the appeal was successful; in the fifth all remained hard and fast in the party lines. There were complaints of coldness or bad faith, of course, on both sides, and on both sides matter for such complaints might have been found. There were cases in which the Liberal Unionist polled fewer votes than a Conservative had polled at the previous election. But my impression is that on the whole there was as much preference of country to Party as could reasonably be expected. There was enough at all events to save the State. Still the bulk of the electors simply voted with their party. Could Party have been really eliminated, the verdict on the simple issue of the Union would have been more decisive. In estimating the force and the efforts of the Liberal Unionists it must be remembered that the organization of the Liberal Party, which was very strong, remained almost everywhere in Separatist hands. The Liberal Unionist managers had to extemporize an organization, which, it seemed to me, they did well. Of the abstentions a large proportion may be taken to have been Unionist. There is, therefore, probably a considerable reserve force for the Union.

Party wrath, of course, was hot against the Liberal Seceders. They were called, like the American Seceders, "Mugwumps." And there really is no little resemblance between them and those high-minded and independent members of the Republican party, who, at the last Presidential election, refused to vote at the dictate of the Caucus for the people's Blaine, and by turning the election in favour of Cleveland, did the Republic the greatest service that has been done it for many a year.

For Mr. Gladstone's scheme not a word, so far as I saw, was said. In the campaign literature of the Separatists it was never mentioned. But a feeling did prevail—and it was entirely creditable to the people—that some great wrong had been done to Ireland, and that reparation ought to be made to her. The people had not studied Irish history, and they could not know that Irish wrongs were a tale of the past, or that Irish sufferings were mainly either self-inflicted or the acts not of Government, but of Nature. Nor could they tell that economical ills would not be cured, but rather aggravated, by political revolution. The plea for conciliation against coercion also produced great effect on the popular heart. And here again the masses were at the mercy of the stump orators, and notably of that grandest of all stump orators, the Prime Minister. It was not easy to meet emotion with facts, and make it plain that "coercion" was nothing but the performance of the first duty of a Government towards the law-abiding citizens of Ireland, whose lives, property, and industry were threatened by a gang of political terrorists and assassins. That the Irish ought to be allowed to manage their own affairs was another argument which told upon simple minds to which Ireland was something very remote, and which could not see that Irish and British affairs, Irish and British property, the Irish and the British races were inextricably blended in the two islands. There was even a vague hope that the Irish policy of Mr. Gladstone was going to clear England of the Irish and take them all back to their own island. It is needless to say that nothing could be further from the truth, inasmuch as the effect of League and New York Government in Ireland would certainly be to scare capital, paralyse trade, and increase destitution, which, as both demagogue and priest strenuously oppose emigration to America or the Colonies, must flow into Great Britain.

Worship of the G. O. M. was very strong. Masses such as now have the suffrage do not think or care much about questions; their imaginations crave for a name and a figure, and the only name and figure, Royalty, having for twenty years effaced itself, are those of Mr. Gladstone. His age excites interest and veneration, and gives him, to the villager's mind, the authority of vast experience.

Democracy, unorganized, thus tends to one-man power. But there was also a feeling, wherever revolutionary longings, whether social or agrarian,