

The Irish Question.

To the Editor of the Free Press.

Sir:—I heartily concur with "R." in reference to our treatment of the Irish question. On what grounds do you ever uphold a minority opposing a majority? What right have we Manitobans to oppose the power at Ottawa or the treatment accorded us from the Federal capital? And I know of no better illustration of galling treatment under the ostensible guise of a parental hand; such as is accorded Ireland. If I agreed with your views on the Irish question, I should certainly be consistent and condemn any agitation in this Western country against constituted authority. Punch's illustration of twelve jurors is not conclusive. In the first place there is not that proportion opposed to this agitation; in the second place, if eleven jurors, influenced by their own selfishness, agree upon a certain verdict, it does not necessarily follow that it is right, or that the one juror should stultify himself to agree with them. There was a slight preponderance of jurors against St. Patrick, Martin Luther and John Knox, but we are not aware that they yielded to the ninety and nine opposed. Possibly there are some extra jurors throughout the world who differ from the English, for instance Vice-President Hendricks, Dana of the New York Sun, and many others in United States and Canada, men of integrity, who heartily endorse Parnell's course. The Irish nation is not confined alone to the little green isle. It has grown and spread, it colors the life and influences the policy of one of the greatest republics which has ever existed, and it may be as well to remember that there are more Irish in this free, blessed Canada of ours than any other nationality in it.

For my part I cannot see why you should go out of the way to strike at Parnell and the Irish, on the strength of probably garbled reports, unreliable as those which were manufactured across the border and published in English papers during our late little unpleasantness.

As to Home Rule, memory tells us that the Hon. Edward Blake, a distinguished son of Ireland, made a splendid speech in favor of Irish Home Rule, was followed by Sir John A. Macdonald in the same strain, a resolution in his favor was passed in the Canadian Parliament and forwarded to the Imperial capital. You must not run away with the idea that Parnell is the first Home Ruler. Dr. Isaac Butt, on whose death the leadership came to Parnell, was an ardent Home Ruler, a man to whose sterling character and ability more than one English paper testified, although they abused him during life. This talk of dismemberment of the empire is simply claptrap. It is a cry raised with equal facility by old foggy bull-headed landlords and nobles in England, the ultra loyal partisans in Canada, when a bold reforming measure is introduced, or a sweeping condemnation of a government is uttered. The Free Press has "dismembered" the confederation a number of times. You surely do not believe this cry. Perhaps the following may throw some light on the case. The London Graphic (an organ not particularly friendly to the Irish), after giving some opinions which are perhaps too lengthy for publication, though very interesting, says: "Thus it comes to pass that, in spite of the outward symbols of freedom, Irish policy is shaped rather by the presumed wishes and prejudices of the inhabitants of Great Britain, than by those of the Irish themselves. But as everyone knows, this policy has been carried out in a vacillating half-hearted fashion. Sugar one day, then stick. Conciliation followed by coercion. The result has been a failure, as is just now shown by the powerlessness of the Government in the face of the boycotting epidemic. A Bismarck might for a change try the Crown colony system, but our politicians, of either party, are too weak-kneed for such a heroic remedy. Another plan is the accordance to Ireland of such a measure of legislative independence as is already the heritage of Canada and Australia. This is the arrangement recommended by Mr. Parnell, and he very frankly tells us that the new Irish Government will protect native manufactures against British competition. This treat sounds so monstrous as to be almost ludicrous, but, after all, it is only the way in which our colonial cousins treat us, and yet we manage to do a thriving trade with them. And it may safely be asserted that, even if Ireland were as independent of Great Britain as are France or Germany, community of language and the force of long-continued habit would keep business in its existing channels. Such being the case, it may be worth while to try the experiment of letting the Irish manage their own domestic affairs." Several of the leading British statesmen speak approvingly of Irish Home Rule.

It will be in order now to show that the people of Ireland are entirely neglecting honest toil while agitating for better laws, or where the cloven hoof or any other hoof of the demagogue comes in and how they have "set themselves of fixed purpose to secure the dismemberment of the British Empire." It strikes one as a little peculiar that we discuss Canadian independence so freely, and condemn any supposition that England would oppose any serious obstacle thereto, and yet the Irish, a distinct nation, are not to be allowed such a modified privilege as Home Rule, which, feeble and restrained as it was when formerly granted, gave Ireland such an impetus in commerce and wealth. Verily, there are different ways of looking at a thing.

"R." wrote good, common sense when he commented on Earl Russell's sentence: "The physical resources of Ireland are vast and almost untouched;" though you have humorously endeavored to turn his point aside. It means that English class jealousy of trade and interests, English class restrictions, English overwhelming capital competition, absentee landlordism, and a host of other evils, which have and are causing her vast resources to remain untouched, would and could be reached by a remedy in the hands of a home Parliament such as Canada possesses. "Inasmuch" as Earl Russell knew that the 8,000,000 population subsisted (barely existed) on the products of the soil and fisheries mainly, and that Ireland's vast resources in minerals, coal, etc., lay untouched, it is to be presumed that he knew whereof he spoke.

The incident of the Galway packet is a point in case, as it will probably not cause "the dismemberment of the Empire." It might be well to consider whether "the generous impulses of the Irish race" are always deceived by designing schemers. It strikes an observer that these "designing schemers" never rise to any particular prominence, unless possessed of true patriotism and self-sacrifice. Her patriots have not been lapped in the cradle of luxury. Would it not be well by lawful concessions to make Ireland a strength to the Union, thereby doing away with the necessity of a large standing army to hold her down—living on her resources? I have spoken of English class jealousy, etc., purposely, as it would be as ridiculous for me to suppose that all Englishmen are opposed to Irish progress as it would be to suppose that all Irishmen are demagogues and show the cloven hoof.

W. J. Woodsides.

Portage la Prairie, Oct. 30, 1885.

The system of selling the poor by auction still prevails in Digby, N. S. It is worked in this fashion:—A person is unable to support himself. The county authorities immediately advertise that he is for sale. That is to say, the county announces its readiness to receive offers for his support, the county to pay the amount per month specified by the successful tenderer, and the tenderer to take the pauper, feed him, and make whatever he can out of him. The lowest tenderer gets the pauper. Sam Slick inveighed against this system years ago, describing it as the white slave system, and latterly attempts have been made, but without success, to abolish it. In view of the abuses said to have crept in under it, a commission has been appointed to enquire into it. The report of this body will be looked for with interest, as will also the action which may possibly follow it.

A strange feature of the Episcopal Church Congress, held last week at New Aaven, was the discussion which took place on "The Ethics of the Tariff Question." What on earth induced the reverend gentlemen assembled there to take up this subject, when there were so many others to which they could better devote their time, is not quite clear. It seems, however, that they had a lesson. The temper and the language in which the question was dealt with showed that even a church congress can lay aside the religious spirit. An American exchange contains the following reference to the debate:—"There is an element of dynamite in all tariff talk that is pretty certain to result in an explosion of some kind, and the attempt of the New Haven congress to deal with the subject proved to be no exception to the rule. Eminent divines and eloquent laymen joined eagerly in a wordy war over the "ethics" of the question, in the course of which there was some pretty hard hitting and a breezy time generally. In fact the discussion made it quite clear that there is enough every-day human nature even in a church congress to render the introduction of the triffling question a dangerous matter." Matters are becoming exceedingly lively when the presiding officer peremptorily adjourned the session.

Companionable People.

In every society we find that the people who are called companionable are those who have a knack of making light of their tribulations and vexations, and a habit of putting them out of sight; who do not entertain their acquaintances with the recital of a bad baking, a leaky pipe, the children's measles, the shortcomings of the servants; who know how to keep their melancholy, if they have any, out of the conversation; whose nerves do not furnish them with material for a morning call, who are not always on the outlook for a draught, or a change of weather, or a slight; who do not lament their poverty aloud, and make us feel responsible for it, and uncomfortable amidst our plenty.

The companionable people never seek to make us dissatisfied with ourselves or our belongings; they talk about the things we like to hear, and are silent on the subjects on which we disagree; they do not differ from us for the sake of differing, and do not announce their opinions as if there were no appeal therefrom. They do not talk you blind, as the saying is, neither do they offend by their taciturnity; they do not have to be drawn out, like defective teeth, but develop their talent as generously and charmingly as the plant develops its blossoms; neither do they pump or catechise us about our affairs, but show a genuine interest in whatever we may choose to impart of a personal nature; and although they never force their confidence upon us, they have none of that frosty reserve which never allows us a glimpse of their hearts.

There are some people who are out of sorts at every hands turn for no legitimate reason—because the sun has gone under a cloud, because they slept badly or ate heartily; but the companionable person makes the best of every situation. She is not fidgety or fussy, and prejudices are not, as with some, her chief characteristic. When she arrives she brings another atmosphere with her, and common things seen with her eyes, become wonderful. She is a person of ideas and bestows them with prodigality; she is not so often a wit as the occasion of wit in others, which is a far more popular being than the mere wit can hope to be; and, although she may only have traveled "a good deal of Cape Cod" yet she has seen and understood more than many who have ransacked Christendom.

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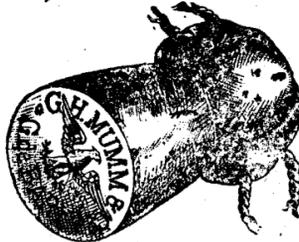
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