

HON. EDWARD BLAKE, M.P.

A Brilliant Speech Before the Manchester Reform Club.

The Hon. Edward Blake, M.P., was the guest last evening at a house dinner at the Manchester Reform Club.

The Hon. E. Blake, M.P., was cordially greeted on rising to respond. After acknowledging the warmth of his reception, he said it afforded him no little gratification to have an opportunity of making the acquaintance of the Liberals of Manchester and saying a few words to them upon that political situation which was now so full of interest, and perhaps of some degree of tension. Those who were engaged in the fight in Parliament itself, and those who immediately surrounded them, were exposed to an atmosphere peculiar to themselves, and one which they did a little themselves to create. It was a very peculiar atmosphere, it seemed to approach a condition of alternations of depression and elation of spirit a sort of mental chill and fever, in which they paid great attention to fluctuating forces and incidents and not quite enough attention to the general considerations upon which the whole progress of their cause depended—(Hear, hear.) He remembered very well, a little before the opening of the present session of Parliament, when there was a very great feeling of depression and despondency amongst Liberals. Like Liberals all the world over, they were a little too much disposed to take their opinion of the situation from their adversaries, who proclaimed with very great emphasis their belief that Mr. Gladstone's Government had not the slightest title to introduce a single measure. It was quite true, they said, that Parliament had pronounced a sentence of decapitation of the Tory Government, but it had not passed a vote of confidence in the Liberal Government—(Laughter.) Hence they looked upon it as an act of presumption on Mr. Gladstone's part to announce in the Queen's Speech that he was about to propose various remedial measures. That matter was very soon settled, and on terms very satisfactory. Partly owing he thought, to the admirable tactics of the Government in the early part of the session, and partly owing to the reverse description of tactics on the side of the Opposition, that degree of despondency which existed in some quarters passed away. The chill passed off and the fever came on, and it was thought they were going to have smooth sailing, not merely for that great measure of Home Rule but for many other important measures. He was not nearly so much depressed as some people were. He saw that the position, while full of difficulty, was also full of hope. The Government, he perceived, although deprived of the support of some of those who were invested with rank, title, and wealth, had an opportunity of rallying to their side the masses of the nation upon their realising the fact as a fact necessary to be acted upon at once that England had become in substance and reality more than ever before in her history a democratic country and required democratic, advanced legislation.—(Cheers.) He hoped, and the hope was realized beyond his expectation, that the Liberal Government would come forward with propositions for legislation upon topics of interest to the people of Britain as well as with the great measure of Home Rule for Ireland—of over-shadowing interest, as he believed, to Britain as well as to Ireland, but still not of such exclusive interest as to prevent an earnest attempt for a Liberal Government to give effect to pressing legislation for Britain. (Hear, hear.) To the charge that the programme of the Government was a dishonest one,

because it was impossible for any Government to pass in a single session of Parliament more than one or at most two contentious measures, he replied that the difficulty of passing measures depended on the character of the Opposition, and if the Liberal Unionists were still Liberal in reality they could and ought to give their support to the Government in dealing with all Liberal matters that were unconnected with Home Rule. It was time, he thought, that their pretence of Liberalism should be either made good or got rid of altogether.—(Cheers.) For himself, he had to say that, as an old Liberal and one who had all his life sympathised with the views of the Liberal party, he rejoiced to see this programme brought forward. He was present that evening not as a Liberal but as an Irish Nationalist member, and he believed that the position of an Irish Nationalist member to-day was one as important to the true interests of this Empire, of this so-called United Kingdom—shortly, he hoped, to be a really united kingdom under the beneficent operation of Home Rule—as that of any other member could be. It was a difficult position, one in which he was obliged to reckon with the feelings created by centuries of wrong and of misgovernment, and at the same time with the forces of public opinion in this island, and he had to consider not merely the difficulties of to-day, but the probable difficulties that would arise under the new dispensation, and to see that there was a substantial settlement of the question that had so long absorbed their attention. Much though they might deplore what had happened during the last seven years, great gains had resulted. The assent of the Irish people in Ireland and all over the world to the Home Rule Bill would be infinitely more solid, real, substantial, and valuable than any assent which might have been procured on the spur of the moment in 1886. (Applause.) During those seven years the work of reconciliation, which must in its nature be a slow work, had been proceeding. The people of Ireland had been taught that it was no sudden spurt of enthusiasm that moved the Liberals in 1886 to adopt the new Irish policy, and that through storm and difficulty and distress they were willing to adhere to it. (Applause.) He did not think they could overvalue the change of feeling and condition of thought which had been created in Ireland. He believed in the union of hearts. His fundamental objection to the whole course of argument on the part of their opponents was that they insisted upon two propositions which he wholly denied. The first was that there existed an irreconcilable division and alienation between the people of Ireland and the people of Britain, and that do what you would you could not obtain a better state of feeling. The second was that between the majority and the minority in Ireland there was a division incapable of being removed. A state of feeling, no doubt, had been aroused in Ireland, amounting in some quarters almost to panic, and nothing could restore confidence except experience of the course of events under Home Rule. But experience would do it. He belonged himself to the minority, and if he believed for a moment that it was possible that the majority in Ireland would use their powers to oppress the minority he would be the last to say they should be entrusted with such powers. It was worth keeping in mind that the struggle of the majority of the Irish people for generations past had been against the ascendancy of a minority. But what they had been fighting for was not the ascendancy or domination, but the great fundamental principles of religious and civil equality. (Applause.) The experiment about to be made was a noble one. It was an appeal to the better feelings of human-

ity. It was founded on a belief that enmities and hostilities would cease when the causes which produced them ceased, and that a better state of feeling would ensue. Produce that better state of feeling and it would solve everything else. (Applause.) In proceeding to discuss various points in the Home Rule Bill Mr. Blake referred to the question of Irish representation at Westminster. There were, he thought reasons in favour of retaining Irish members in the Imperial Parliament which would outweigh the inconveniences. He pointed out that at present the Irish members made and unmade Governments, and suggested that if their presence were tolerable now it would be much more so when they appeared in the House in reduced numbers, and with the influences removed which had in the past compelled them to look at measures, not upon their merits, but as to the way in which they would operate for or against Irish interests. He recognised the probability that the granting of Home Rule to Ireland would lead gradually of course, to the extension of the principle of self government to England, Scotland, and Wales. He had never disguised the opinion that this measure was a transition measure, in a sense. He believed that the British people were taking a step after their own fashion—going a certain distance at a time, and not attempting to make a new heaven and a new earth by one operation. (Laughter and cheers.) After they had tried the experiment they would, he had no doubt, come to the conclusion that a greater transfer of the powers of government to the several communities composing the British nation would be advantageous to all the parties concerned. Of course it might be said there were anomalies in the scheme. The British Constitution bristled with anomalies. There was not one portion that might not be made unworkable, but the common sense and power of the people would speedily remove any disturbing element of that kind, and the common sense and power of the British people were not going to be diminished by this bill. On the contrary, if the position in the future were found to be intolerable they could easily remedy the evil, and they would have a right to do so. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Blake afterwards discussed the financial proposals of the bill. He thought it was absurd for Mr. Balfour to say that we ought not to consider either what Ireland paid now towards Imperial purposes or what it could reasonably pay. His own notion was that in making this great national settlement we should apply the ordinary business considerations which we would apply in the case of two partners making a fresh bargain. (Applause.) He thought that too great a demand was being made upon Ireland. We were asking from her a yearly contribution that might be put down at £2,310,000 instead of £1,600,000 or £1,700,000 we had been receiving. We were bound to consider what Ireland could conveniently pay, and under no circumstances ought she to pay more than she reasonably could. At present Ireland was one of the most highly taxed countries in Europe, it was over-taxed absolutely and relatively. The whole matter with regard to finance was no doubt complicated; but he believed it was susceptible of adjustment when approached in a reasonable spirit. (Applause.) He suggested that instead of taking the current year as a basis for calculation a number of years should be taken into consideration. As to the restrictions in the bill, he saw no objections to them whatever. It was no humiliation to have inserted in a written Constitution what were after all the fundamental principles of civil and religious liberty. It had been done in the Constitution of the United States and in other Constitutions; and if the British Constitution

were a written Constitution, based on a convention or plebiscite, we would ourselves incorporate some of these restrictions. If we did not we would be making a mistake. For his own part he would write the restrictions in letters of gold. (Applause.) They would have two effects. One effect would be to prevent open violation. If they were openly violated, or if attempts were made to violate them in letter or spirit, the law would be void. But there was another effect. They laid down the lines on which the Irish Government should proceed, and if the Irish Legislature should so prostitute its powers and be guilty of such bad faith as to violate the spirit of those restrictions, there was ample power in the Imperial Parliament to reassert the principles of civil and religious liberty. On the other hand, the Irish people would see in those things their charter of liberty. So long as they kept within those lines the Imperial Parliament, they would see, would not interfere. The Duke of Devonshire said he thought it unlikely that these things would happen, but then such things were possible. They could not, he answered, conduct affairs of State on possibilities; they must conduct them on probabilities, and on a consideration of the motives which actuate mankind in general; and would it not be a suicidal policy for any leader of the Irish people to place himself in a position which might call for interference from the Imperial Parliament? He therefore discarded the suggestion as to possibilities as unworthy of consideration. With reference to the provisions for respecting the religious scruples of parents of children attending the public schools in Ireland Mr. Blake considered them sufficient and perfectly fair. Therefore, while he regarded these restrictions as not needful in one sense, he looked upon them as highly useful in another sense, and trusted that the views of the Duke of Devonshire and others that the present differences were doomed—he was going to say by some decree of Providence, but he would not say that—that the present differences were doomed by an infernal rather than supernal power to be perpetual would be dismissed, and that Englishmen would act in the hope and confidence and belief that in doing a great act of justice and relying on the better feelings of humanity they would reap their reward. By doing this act of justice they would not rob Parliament of any of the power it now had; they would have not merely all the power they now possessed, but a greater power than they could ever have under the present dispensation of correcting any wrong or crime which might be committed by those to whom they had committed the government of Ireland. Therefore, he said, give them that which they asked—the power to manage their own local concerns; give them that power which we would insist upon having for ourselves; lay broad the foundations of a real union between the two kingdoms, and restore to efficiency and power and dignity the great and venerable Parliament of England. Then we would have a United Kingdom in the truest sense—a Kingdom united by bonds of peace and love. (Applause.)

"Six days shalt thou labor," says the great lawgiver. To do good work, man must be at his best. This condition is attained by the use of Ayer's Sarsaparilla. It overcomes that tired feeling, quickens the appetite, improves digestion, and makes the weak strong.

It is announced from Rome that Cardinal Vaughan is the bearer of special friendly messages from Leo XIII., to Mr. Gladstone.

Cause and Effect.

Coughs and colds are the cause if neglected, of consumption. It is therefore much better to cure them at once by the use of Hagar's Pectoral Balsam, the safe, sure and reliable remedy for all diseases of the throat and lungs.