

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATES.

VII. THE HONORABLE EDWARD BLAKE, LL.D., K.C., M.P.

THE HONORABLE EDWARD BLAKE was among the earliest students of the University of Toronto. He matriculated in the course of the very first year of the University's existence, 1849-50, and graduated with honors and a medal in Literae Humaniores in 1854. The great expansion of the University from those small beginnings of 50 years ago is paralleled by Mr. Blake's own career. His early successes at the bar and in public life were rapidly and brilliantly won. In 1867, the first year of his election to Parliament, he was offered the leadership of the Liberal party in the Provincial House. He was 34 years of age at the time. In 1871 he formed a Ministry for Ontario but resigned in a few months to devote himself exclusively to Federal politics. He was Minister of Justice from 1875 to 1878 in the Mackenzie Administration, and for nine years thereafter he was the leader of the Liberal party in the cold shades of opposition. In 1890 he retired from Canadian politics, but found himself unable to withdraw altogether from public life, as he perhaps had contemplated; for a pressing invitation came to him two years later to cast in his lot with the Irish Nationalist party in the Imperial House of Commons, and was accepted. Since that time he has represented an Irish constituency in the British Parliament. As a Parliamentarian, Mr. Blake has been unfortunate. Except for the brief period of the Mackenzie Ministry he has had no opportunity of initiating and carrying out a policy or of administering a Department of the public service. But that the time spent by him in politics has therefore been wasted, nobody who has followed the course of Parliamentary affairs in this country will affirm. The Opposition is like the tail of a kite, that steadies its flight while seeming to drag it down. Who shall say that the statesmanlike criticism of Mr. Blake and his fellows in Opposition, or even the fear of the scrutiny that his clear and logical mind would give to every measure proposed, did not keep Conservative statesmanship sane and sound during Sir John Macdonald's long career as Prime Minister of the Dominion?

As a lawyer, Mr. Edward Blake's career has been without a shadow. When he left Canada in 1892 he had been for many years recognized as the head of the bar of his Province. His residence in London for the last ten years has enabled him to hold frequent briefs in Canadian appeals to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. In constitutional cases he has been especially conspicuous, and it is not too much to say that the present satisfactory settlement of the constitutional law of this country is due mainly to Mr. Blake's arguments and expositions before the Privy Council. It is, indeed, as a lawyer that Mr. Blake is seen at his best. Even his political speeches are distinguished by logical cogency rather than persuasiveness. He seems never so much at his ease as in dealing with masses of facts and figures, marshalling them by battalions in support of his argument, like a general directing the movements of an army. In short, his appeal is always to reason and intellect, and on that account his speeches will be most relished by minds highly trained like his own.

In the columns of THE VARSITY it would not do to pass lightly over Mr. Edward Blake's work for his Alma Mater, although modesty has prompted us to postpone it to the consideration of his political and legal achievements. He was elected Chancellor of the University as far back as 1876 and resigned in 1900, in consequence of his continued absence in England. Except for presiding annually at Commencement he took little active part in the affairs of the University until after the great fire of 1890. The situation at that time was critical. Financial difficulties were already looming up, and many causes for dissatisfaction existed in the internal government of the institution. Mr. Blake at once accepted the responsibility that he conceived to attach to his position as Chancellor. He

became a constant attendant at meetings of the Senate, and took his share of committee work with the other members. He did more; he voluntarily assumed the formidable task of presenting a report to the Provincial Government on the whole condition of the University. The comprehensive survey of requirements in that report has been the basis of the expansion that has since taken place. It is no disparagement to say that a new basis is needed now after twelve years of unprecedented growth; but that they have been years of expansion instead of years of conflict and chaos is largely due to Mr. Blake and his exertions in 1890.

Besides lending the University the mighty aid of his character and his brains, Mr. Blake has given largely to her from his purse. The list of scholarships on pages 59 to 64 of the University Calendar is sufficient testimony to his munificence in that direction. But his generosity has also swelled the funds of many University collecting committees whose lists of subscribers are not published to the world. As the beneficiary of his money and his labors the University has every reason to be grateful to her former Chancellor, and she may well be proud of him as of one of the most distinguished and widely known of her sons. THE VARSITY wishes him God-speed and length of days.

THE KEY TO AN EMPIRE.

WE sometimes think that learning is confined largely to our western countries and that all the great centres of influence are to be found in the Occident. It is interesting to know, however, that in many respects, as an educational centre, Calcutta is the most important city in the world. Last year over thirteen thousand students were examined in the University of Calcutta, and more than thirty thousand boys were in attendance at the seventy-four High Schools of that one city.

Its importance, however, does not consist merely in the great number of its students, but rather in the position which these men hold in the Indian Empire. After spending four years or more in these colleges they scatter throughout India to occupy all the positions of influence and responsibility. They become the Government officials, the business men, the professional men, the newspapermen. As they alone do any independent thinking, they are molding the whole opinion and life of that vast Empire. It is evident, therefore, that those influences which are brought to bear upon them during their college days, and which inculcate themselves into their character, are the influences which will tend toward making of the destiny of a nation.

The Young Men's Christian Association of Calcutta, by raising the ideals of these men, and helping to form in them true character, is doing great service for India, and because it is doing this for India it is doing it also for the whole British Empire, of which India forms such an important part.

It is a matter of interest to us, as Canadian students, to know that we are having a hand in this, on account of the support given to this work by sixty or more colleges and schools of this country, united under the name of the Canadian Colleges' Mission.

J. L. MCPHERSON.

UNHAPPY SUSAN.

Susan, sitting in the sun,
Was playing with a loaded gun;
Her father, who just happened by,
Received the buckshot in his eye.
But Susan cried, her heart was broke,
'Cause papa couldn't see the joke.