

ONE OF TORONTO'S ALUMNI.

Many years ago during the course of a political campaign a prominent public man visited one of our Ontario towns. The chairman of the meeting which the visitor was to address eulogized his character and public services, and in reply the speaker said: "I do not know why you, sir, have so lauded me, for you know I am a *plain* man, and have come to say *plain* words to *plain* people like myself." The memory of the speech which followed those simple words, the remembrance of its close logic, its dignity, its overwhelming power, still live in the minds of old campaigners who delight in telling the young of the battles and the heroes of the past. But should one say heroes of the past? Certainly the phrase should not be applied to the orator on this occasion, the Honorable Edward Blake, if it implied that he was not also a heroic figure at the present day.

Mr. Blake was born in the village of Cairngorm, Ontario, on Oct. 13th, 1833. His father, Mr. Hume Blake, was a prominent Canadian statesman and Chancellor of Upper Canada College. The son was educated at Upper Canada College, and at the University of Toronto. He graduated in 1854, a silver medalist in classics. Two years later he was called to the bar, and commenced practice in the city. His marked ability gave him a firm, in which his brother, Mr. S. H. Blake, soon joined him, a leading position in the Dominion. Mr. Blake was appointed treasurer of the Law Society in '79; was for a time lecturer on Equity Law for the Law Society, and was honorary member of the Law Faculty in the University of Toronto, '88.

It was the epoch of Confederation and a stirring time in Canadian politics when Mr. Blake began his political career. In 1867 he was elected member for the Ontario Legislature, and in '69 accepted leadership of the Liberal party therein. In '71 he formed an administration as President of Council, but soon after left his leadership in the Cabinet to enter the broader field of Dominion politics. He has been called "the father of Liberal Government in his native Province," and justly, since the party which he then formed has remained in power until this day.

In the House of Commons success again fell to the lot of the distinguished lawyer and orator. He won a place in the Cabinet under Alexander Mackenzie, and after the defeat of the Liberal party he led it in opposition until '87, when he retired. In 1892, in response to an invitation from Ireland to do battle for her cause in the British House of Commons, he contested and carried South Longford.

Some three years ago in moving an amendment to the speech from the throne on the question of the proper taxation of Ireland he made a masterly effort, which firmly established his position as one of the first actors in the Commons.

His work, too, on the South African Committee in '96, particularly his cross-examination of Mr. Rhodes, was much commended.

In the cause of Home Rule Mr. Blake's efforts have been persistent. With hand and voice he has characteristically supported his firm convictions.

Our University has had no better friend than the Chancellor who but recently resigned. His interest in higher education was not remarkable, seeing that his father—whose portrait adorns our library—was a Professor in King's College, and for a time Chancellor of the University. Mr. Edward Blake became Chancellor in 1873; he has given some \$20,000 as a scholarship fund,

and has also benefited Wycliffe College to at least an equal amount. In 1889 the University very fittingly conferred upon its Chancellor the degree of LL.D. Nor has Mr. Blake forgotten his Alma Mater. In a recent letter to the Senate he expressed the hope that he would some day be able to return to renew his interest in the University.

The name of Edward Blake is known throughout all the land; in the Province of Quebec especially is it most highly respected, being there taken to signify all that is purest and highest in politics. His intellectual dignity and moral elevation have won him his high place. His powerful mind grasped with wonderful rapidity legal and political questions in all their leanings, and during his public career his opinion had the greatest weight with all. His high moral tone brought him unsullied out of the contaminating political atmosphere; he would not be a party to any questionable tactics. All compromise or any swerving from his own convictions were impossible to him; in this respect he failed as a party leader. He looked with impartial mind beyond the horizon of the narrow partisan, and when he formed his convictions, his strong will would always adhere to them. Mr. Blake, too, lacked other qualities necessary for a perfect leader. He has ever been a very sensitive as well as a very reserved man. He could not mingle freely and pleasantly with his brother members. An anecdote told of him illustrates this. One of his Liberal lieutenants advised him to crack jokes with the members, and to be more generally agreeable. "But I can't," said he; "at any rate, show me." Well, talk about the weather to them," replied the other; "if a man happens to remark that it is snowing, you can say, 'Oh, it's (s)now matter'." Mr. Blake thought the advice good, and when a member in conversation with him remarked that it was snowing he replied with the greatest dignity, "Oh, that is perfectly immaterial," and naturally didn't secure the desired effect.

Mr. Blake is a great orator in every sense. He combines great physical vigor with a rich, powerful voice always properly used—the instrument of a keen and lofty mind. The clearness of his reasoning, and the force and power in his delivery enabled him in his career in Canada to mold his hearers to his will, to carry them with him in unbounded enthusiasm. Sometimes the thoughts would come too rapidly, making his sentences too long, the parenthesis too many, and the style burdened and heavy, but this one defect was forgotten in the high perfection of the whole.

True it is that Mr. Blake no longer in an official capacity aids in the deliberations of our governing assemblies, but he is still a great force working for the true and the right amongst us; he is

"Consul non unius anni Sed quotiens bonus atque fidus iudex honestum prae tulit utili.

His work for Irish Home Rule, and his stand on some recent questions, may not be pleasing to some ardent loyalists, but we can all sympathize with these words of his: "I am an Irishman, and an Imperialist, not in a jingo sense, but an Imperialist in the fullest sense of the word, and with the hope that the destiny of the British Empire is to occupy the foremost position as a civilizer and a Christianizer throughout the world."

E. J. KYLIE, '01.

It has been decided to add 4,000 more seats to the east stand at Yale Field on account of the unusually large demand for seats at the Yale-Harvard game this year.