

ORATORS IN THE IRISH PARLIAMENT.

Few nations have been so blessed in its orators as Ireland. Other nations have had great orators, but in nearly all instances they have been the product of generations of culture and prosperity, or else were of the rugged uncultured sort that spring up suddenly in cases of necessity, when appeals to the lower or animal element of feeling may be eloquent in their simplicity or their passion. In Ireland the conditions have been very different. What in the lowest scale of comparison is irresistibly called "gift of the gab," (by people who do not like anything Irish, who cannot think rapidly enough to talk quickly and are consequently envious) rises by natural gradation to the sublimest oratorical flights. It seems a heaven sent gift and it is all the more striking in its application when it is considered that never did Irish eloquence shine so brilliantly as in the heavy days of the 18th century, when a few noble men set their faces against tyranny and strove to stop the traitorous iniquity which culminated in the act of Union. Of the previous Catholic Parliament under King James we know comparatively little as to the abilities of the members. We do not know that at the present time it would be characterized as a strictly business-like body, who had the power to act and did act for the country's good. There were no marble hearts to be moved by floods of eloquence, but there were evils to be remedied as far as could be done in one short session, many remedies were applied. But the defeat of King James in the following year, 1690, precluded all possibility of a Catholic Parliament in Ireland. One motion made in the House at this time has been the keynote of nearly all agitations for Irish liberty. It was moved "that the Parliament of England cannot bind Ireland," and nearly a century afterward Henry Grattan was fighting along the same lines. Taxing the property of absent landlords was one of the measures passed by the Parliament of 1689. Even in our day absenteeism has been a source of financial trouble in Ireland; but two hundred years ago the situation was much more acute. We have a record of the deeds of this Parliament, but comparatively nothing about its words, more is the pity.

With the Irish Parliament which was betrayed out of existence in 1800, the world is better acquainted. Perhaps never in the history of legislative bodies, has there been one which in brilliancy, eloquence, wit, repartee, sarcasm, and without sound logical reasoning, which compared with the Irish Parliament of which such men as Grattan, Curran, Flood, Hussey, Burgh, Conyngham, Plunket were members. Fired with spirit of patriotic zeal, they have left behind them the echo of words that thundered in invective against the political corruption of the day and the sycophancy of place hunters. When it is considered that the Irish Parliament in 1782, was exclusively Protestant that a Catholic could not vote, much less become a member, that all, or nearly all the political offices were filled by Englishmen, that an oppressed peasantry groaning under the yoke of bigotry and penal laws was afraid even of being suspected of complaining—when all these things are to be considered it is almost to be wondered at that a band of brave men dared stand up in their places in Parliament and boldly tell the whole truth to a tyrannical and corrupt government. Pure patriotism was the only stimulant these men had; the very cause they took was potent a bar to all political ambition; but with the courage of conviction they fought as would a forlorn hope and left behind them memories that men will revere for ever more.

Among this grand band of patriots none stand forward more prominently than Henry Grattan. A born leader of men, he was gifted with all the attributes of head and heart that make a friend love and an enemy fear. His eloquence was at the same time impassioned and convincing and even in the face of that flood of corruption that was eventually to swamp all semblance of legislative liberty in Ireland, he fought to the last ditch and did fighting for the political and religious freedom of his native land. Had there been a few more men like Grattan what a different history Ireland's might have been during the past century. The temptations offered to members of Parliament were great. Bribery seems to small a word to characterize the stupendous corruption fund that the English government used to wipe out the Parliament in Dublin. A sum equivalent to six and a half million dollars was spent in pocket boroughs; twenty Irish peers were promoted; twenty-two Irish peerages were created and five in the peerage of England. It was so

thoroughly bad that even Lord Cornwallis was heartily ashamed of the part he was forced to play.

Writing in the Freeman, Mr. Thos. E. Mayne, of Belfast, makes a somewhat elaborate study of the prominent orators of the Irish Parliament. Speaking of Grattan he says—

"He has already done a great work. He had, with the help of a small party of noble-minded men, rescued the Irish House of Commons from a position of the utmost servility to the English government and made it for a time an independent house of legislature. Very early in his political career he had moved the unopposed resolution—'That the King with the Lords and Commons of Ireland, are the only power on the earth competent to enact laws to bind Ireland.' The oration in which he supported this resolution is of a very lofty character. In the course of this speech he said—'Sir, we may hope to dazzle with illumination and we may sicken with addresses, but the public imagination will never rest, nor will her heart be well at ease—never! so long as the Parliament of England exercises or claims a legislation over this country. So long, as this will be the case, that very free trade, otherwise a perpetual attachment, will be the cause of new discontent; it will create a pride to feel the indignity of bondage; it will furnish a strength to bite your chain, and the liberty withheld will poison the good communicated.'"

Grattan possessed a national sympathy wide enough to embrace people of all creeds and classes in Ireland. Many a time he sternly rebuked the spirit of religious intolerance so rife in his day; his idea of an Irish Parliament was not that of a select body of men legislating for a party; petty intriguing for the predominance of religious faction he abhorred. The Catholic people of Ireland had never a better advocate for their claims than he proved himself to be. He made some very beautiful appeals for a wider spirit of charity among the different denominations. "Prayer is adoration, not service; by serving one another you become a part of His creation, an auxiliary member of His system; for this the Redeemer came among you." In condemnation of bigots he said trenchantly—"As far as anything is personal to the Almighty, they are ready to obey; but further they beg to decline, and they make a compromise with their Maker; they praise God, and damn one another."

The enemies of the Roman Catholics have confined the universal benevolence of the Gospel to their own sect, and have deprived their fellow-Christians of one great attribute of the Almighty; they have not only taken from the Deity His attributes, but they have given Him their own, and made him a partial and penal God, the minister of their ambition."

In speaking Grattan's symbols were generally great and noble. Here is a specimen:—

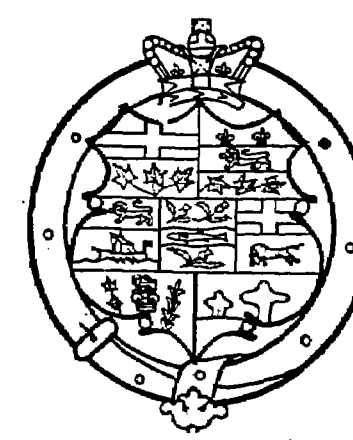
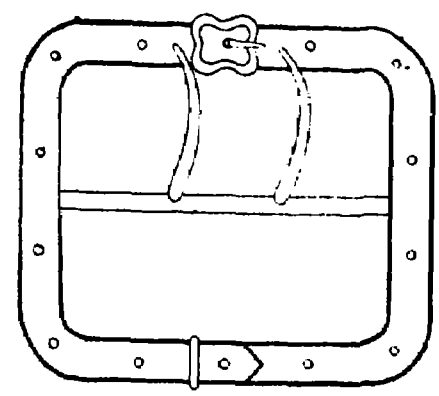


"There was a time when the vault of liberty could hardly contain the flight of your pinions; some of you went forth like a giant rejoicing in his strength, and now you stand like elves at the door of your pandemonium. The armed youth of the country like a thousand streams thundered from a thousand hills and filled the plain with congregated waters, in whose mirror was seen for a moment the watery image of the British Constitution; the waters subside, the torrents cease, the rill ripples within its own bed, and the boys and children of the village paddle in the brook."

At the opening of the session of 1880, Grattan, rising from his sick-bed, made his last speech against the Union in the Irish House of Commons. It was characterized by all his old fiery earnestness. Dublin was full of English soldiery. After a short, sharp struggle, the suborned Court Party prevailed, and the Bill was carried. The Act came in force on 1st January, 1801.

After the Union Grattan entered the English Commons, and continued to plead for Catholic Emancipation. In 1820 he left his residence at Timoninch with shattered health to make one more effort. He never reached the Imperial Parliament, the physical and mental strain, the consciousness of defeat, were too much for human strength to support. He died in London with the name of Ireland on his lips. Thus perished, perhaps, the noblest, certainly the most gifted, of the orators of the Irish Parliament.

Perhaps the second in the brilliant galaxy of Irish Parliamentarians was John Philip Curran. It was at the Irish Bar, however, that this great orator principally made his reputation, and always was he on the side of the patriots. Few forensic rival his great achievements, in defence of Wolfe Tone and the Sheares brothers. He was vigorous even to audacity,

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and unmerciful in his onslaughts. His reasoning was acute, his language polished, even if his delivery at times was fiery and impetuous. "His career in the House of Commons," says Mr. Mayne, was brilliant if brief. His speeches against the prevailing evils of the Legislature were as outspoken and almost as effective as those of Grattan. His remarks on the Catholic question are characterized by great boldness and penetration; when at his best he let fall sentence after sentence like the strokes of a sword, keen, easy, heavy and well aimed. "Against the union he directed some of his most powerful diatribes, it was in his eyes 'the annihilation of Ireland.'"

At another period he said: "If any one desires to know what a union with Great Britain would be I will tell him. It would be the emigration of every man of consequence from Ireland; it would be the participation of British taxes, without British trade; it would be the extinction of the Irish name as a people. We should become a wretched colony, perhaps leased out to a company of Jews, as was formerly in contemplation, and governed by a few tax-gatherers and excise men, unless, possibly, you may add fifteen or twelve couple of Irish members, who may be found every session sleeping in their collars under the wing of the British ministry." Curran's fate was a sad one. Many misfortunes, some of a painful nature fell upon him, his mental powers gradually failed, and his rare and bright gifts at length utterly deserted him. The story of the love of the ill-fated Robert Emmet for his daughter, and of her subsequent death is well known. Such misfortunes as these crushed the buoyant spirit, patriotic advocate to earth. He survived the extinction of his intellectual powers for some years, and at length expired in London, 11th October, 1817. His body now sleeps in Glasnevin Cemetery, where so many of Ireland's noble sons are laid to rest, held in proud and enduring remembrance by their countrymen.

During part of his Parliamentary career, Henry Flood was a very much misunderstood man. Up to 1774 Flood, who had entered the House in 1759, had been considered the leader of the Patriotic Party. His acceptance of office under the Crown lost him the confidence of the Irish people, who transferred their allegiance to Grattan. He defended his action eloquently, however, and declared that a man in office could do no more for his country as any one standing solely as a representative of the people; that indeed, an influential position was necessary to enable a statesman to make his actions widely felt and thoroughly effective. There is every reason to think that these were his honest opinions, and that he had persuaded himself that he was following the course best calculated to benefit the nation. Flood's preferences were of the calculating reasoning kind. He never was impetuous, but he could be extremely caustic when occasion demanded. Of him it is said—

"His speech bespoke the character of the man. It was entirely free from rhetorical flourishes. It was always plain and to the point. He condensed his meaning into the smallest bounds possible. His sentences were terse and nervous, and his statements clear and lucid. His imagination was kept in subservience to his reasoning powers; he strove to convince rather than to dazzle or overwhelm with brilliant eloquence. Flashes of imaginative oratory did brighten his speeches; fanciful and quaint passages lit up his address to the House, but calm reason prevailed over all other attributes. His appeal was often to the head than to the heart, thus placing him in marked contrast to

his great compatriot Grattan; and he refused to allow himself to be carried away by the passion or excitement of the moment."

In 1780, finding himself hampered by his position as a paid servant of the British Government, he threw up his post with all its privileges and emoluments, the better to follow out his own ideas with regard to right and justice. In all his movements we can see that he was strictly guided by the dictates of conscience. It is to be remembered that it was mainly due to his uncompromising attitude of demand that the Act of Renunciation—the largest and most important concession ever won for Ireland—was wrung from the British Parliament. Only a narrow and partial judgment can refuse to Henry Flood the title of a truly patriotic Irish orator.

1783 Flood left the Irish House of Commons, where he was able in company with Edmund Burke to watch over, to some extent, the interests of his native country.

Not so well remembered as Grattan, Flood or Curran, but still an able man and a true patriot was Hussey Burgh. Like Flood he bore office under the Government, but he never lost his independence. The ministerial party had relied on him to support any measure no matter how corrupt, which they might introduce, and great was their chagrin when they discovered that Hussey Burgh was not made of such plastic material as to sacrifice his honor and his country for personal advancement.

Upon the question of Free Trade, the question as to whether Ireland was to be bound hand and foot for the benefit of English merchants, his patriotism overcame his feeling as a parliamentary official. He rose to move that—"We beg to represent to His Majesty (George III.) that it is not by temporary expedients, but by free trade alone, that this nation is now to be saved from impending ruin." And from that time forth he became one of the staunchest and most useful supporters of Grattan.

The following extract from one of his speeches will serve to illustrate Hussey Burgh's style of oratory—

"The usurped authority of a foreign Parliament has kept the most wicked laws that a zealous, monopolizing, ungrateful spirit could devise, to restrain the bounty of Providence and enslave a nation whose inhabitants are regarded to be brave, loyal, and generous people; by the English code of laws, to answer the most sordid views, they have been treated with a savage cruelty, the words penalty, punishment, and Ireland, are synonymous, they are marked in blood on the margin of their statutes; and though time may have softened the calamities of the nation, the beneficial and destructive influences of these laws have borne her down to a state of Egyptian bondage. The English have sowed their laws like serpent's teeth, and they have sprung up in armed men."

"The gates of preferment are shut," cried Grattan, springing to his feet after this speech. "But the gates of glory are opened."

The gates of preferment were indeed shut, Hussey Burgh lost his place and emoluments; but he rose at once high in popular estimation. At meetings held over all the country he was presented with addresses of thanks. The freedom of the corporation of many towns was given to him. An address from the Corporation of Carrickfergus was presented to him in a gold box by Barry Yelverton, who was then Recorder of the town.

William Conyngham Plunket, who afterward became Lord Chancellor, made many striking and eloquent protests against the Act of Union.

Mr. Bushe, who rose subsequently to the position of chief justice for Ireland, denounced the measure in no conciliatory terms. Mr. Saurin, afterwards a Privy Councillor and an Attorney General, bitterly condemned this deliberately planned robbery of a country's liberties. Many other orators took this side of the question; indeed it may be said that it had a monopoly of the highest talent and the uncorrupted conscience of the House.

Certain it is that at no time before or since in Ireland was such a galaxy of oratorical talent displayed as in the Irish House of Commons. The Parliament seemed to call great and mellifluous-tongued men into existence. They sprang up on every side to uphold the honor of their country, and to make this epoch in its history a glorious, if, as it must ever be considered a sad one. They battled with corruption, they fought for truth and purity in the land, they attempted to cope with the forces of evil which were ranged in serried and solid ranks before them. In that great and hopeless fight they stand out as heroes to all times, and as examples for the emulation of those who were and are to follow.

IRELANDS FUTURE.

I look toward a land both old and young—old in its Christianity, young in its promise of the future; a nation which received grace before the Saxon came to Britain, and which has never questioned it; a church which comprehends in its history the rise and fall of Canterbury and York, which Augustin and Paulinus found and Pole and Fisher left behind them. I contemplate a people which has had a long night and will have an ineffectual day. I am turning my eyes towards a hundred years to come, and I duly see the Ireland I am gazing on become the road of passage, and union between the two hemispheres, and the centre of the world. I see its inhabitants rival Belgium in population, France in vigor, and Spain in enthusiasm.—Cardinal Newman.

HOME LONGINGS.

D. A. McCarthy, in the Cork Herald.

When I feel the breezes blowing, strongly blowing from the west,
An' I mark the steamers sailin' back across the ocean's breast,
Then my heart is sick within me to be goin' with the rest
To Ireland.

For the weary years are long
An' I'm longin' for the sight of Ire-
An' I'm longin' for the sight of Ire-
land.

Oh, happy are the people who with streamin' eyes behold,
In the blessed light of mornin' once again her headlands hold,
And happy thrice are they who tread the scenes beloved of old,
In Ireland.

For the exiled years of grief
In their present joy is brief,
An' they're happy to be back in Ire-
land.

Let me come again to Ireland ere my days be all forewent,
Though my hair be white as ashes an' my body weak and bent,
Let me only come to die there, an' O God, I'll die content,
In Ireland.

For 'tis sweet when life is past,
To lie down to rest at last
With the friends of our youth in Ire-
land.

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UNDER THE BONDAGE OF THE CLOCK.

No mechanism is more widely used, none more indispensable than the clock. It times little daily tasks; it marks the beginnings of great undertakings. It is consulted constantly. A successful man recently gave as the safest, the surest rule for success, "Keep your eye on the clock."

The advice is ambiguous. There is a watching of the clock that is harmful. Promptness has been over-landed as a quality of success. The average young man of to-day prides himself that he is at the bank or in the office at the stroke of nine, and to be consistent in his promptness he lays down his work at the stroke of six. He keeps his eye on the clock all day long; he watches the moving hands much too closely. He wastes time that is his employer's in thinking how the day drags, in wondering how he will spend the evening, in dreaming of the golden future when he will be an employer and need only come to his office when inclination prompts. The young man is punctual with his employer; he is not punctual with himself.

There is another type of man who keeps his eye on the clock from an entirely different motive. He times all his work; he arranges his tasks so that each minute is full. Ten minutes in which to do a certain thing means steady work. It is done, and, keeping his eye on the clock, he maps out and limits some other line of work. At the stroke of six he does not stop unless what he is doing is finished. There is a watching that saves time, and what more satisfactory balance-sheet than that kept with the clock? When the day closes the eight hours' work represents eight hours' work. There comes the satisfaction from work faithfully done, the realization that the possibilities of every moment have been utilized. The man is punctual with his employer; he is punctual with himself. He is storing for his future use a reserve fund of power; he is working under high pressure, but the higher the pressure the greater his confidence in his own ability.

The young man who would succeed in any line must learn the science of making every moment tell. Ten minutes earlier to work, half an hour later at the store, are not minutes wasted. They are man's investment in time, and the returns may be incalculable. When the great books are balanced men will be faced with the enormous debit of minutes wasted, and it will be seen that the length of that column will be commensurate with the shortness of the credit column of work accomplished.

We all keep our eyes on the clock, but we should watch it to conserve time, not to waste it; to increase, not to decrease our power of work. We should be masters, not servants of time.—In the Saturday Evening Post.

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